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MILLICENT NEVILLE.

MILLICENT NEVILLE:

A Novel.

By JULIA TILT,

AUTHOR OF "MAY HAMILTON," "THE OLD PALACE," "LAURA TALBOT," ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

"I have not words—alas!—to tell
The loveliness of loving well!"

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

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MILLICENT.

CHAPTER I.

MISTAKEN IDENTITY.

Time heals everything. Time softens the recollections of past sorrows. It also robs past joys of their brightness.

Time fleshed over Millicent's heart-wounds, and she was herself again.

She saw very little of her husband, except at stated intervals. He was regular in attendance at breakfast, so was she. Silently the meal passed over; he, engaged with the "Times," she, with the "Post." Breakfast finished, she consulted his wishes as to what he would like done: whether he dined at home, had company, or not. To all this he answered with cold brevity, laying down his plans as far as concerned himself and his friends with grave

composure. No smile ever illumined his lip, no ray of light ever crossed his face. Scrupulously civil, carefully exact, he treated Millicent as he would a female relation, who was valuable on account of her good qualities, but personally disagreeable to himself.

Millicent felt this conduct, it cut her to the quick; but there is an old saying, that what doesn't kill, cures. She strengthened herself by prayer, and carried her woes to the feet of Him who is ever ready to listen to our griefs. She sought out her Saviour, implored Him to aid her, and found, as all do who truthfully and earnestly seek Him, that peace which He alone can give. Thus comforted and invigorated she called all the powers of her strong mind to counsel and assist her; and like all of us, when we actually put our shoulders to the wheel, she succeeded. Like David, when his child was dead, she knew the worst; and like the Royal Psalmist she arose, and cast her cares behind her, determining to waste no more time in unavailing regrets. She had made a grand mistake—had married a man she knew little of, without thought of the future; but it had been her own choice, done with her own free will, and now she made up her mind to

make the best of it. Therefore she employed herself with a force and vigour that brought its own reward. She considered herself as a sort of honorary appendage to her husband, and she set about acquitting herself with credit in her new occupation. With untiring zeal did she look after the ways of her household, so that he lacked none of his comforts. Her books were regulated weekly, and as her husband looked them over and gave her the cheques, she could see sometimes a half frown pass over his brow, as if quite vexed he had nothing to find fault with.

Her household cares over—her darling boy sent out for his morning's walk—her stern, dark master gone to his club, his office, or perchance to Mrs. Vere—Millicent sat down and studied hard, practised her music, read her German, wrote to her friends, worked, in short did everything, save allow herself time to dwell upon the past; and so engrossed did she become at last with her employments, that often the luncheon-bell rang before she had half finished her allotted tasks.

After luncheon she either drove out or received visitors at home, and so completely did she contrive to master her feelings—so

easy and unembarrassed was she in her manner, that visitor after visitor came and departed, declaring that Mrs. Neville was grown more beautiful than ever, and looked so happy, that all the idle stories they had heard, of her not being on good terms with her husband, could be nothing more nor less than idle fabrications. For, of course, Rumour did not let Millicent alone. The Brook-Street household had imparted confidentially to the Guildford-Street servants their suspicions that all was not right between master and mistress. Mrs. Thompson had told old Hannah, while taking tea in her snug housekeeper's room, some points which, as she phrased it, "couldn't be gainsayed;" and old Hannah, who had lived with Mrs. Morley ever since Millicent was born, told her mistress that her poor dear Miss Millicent was being shamefully used, and that Mr. Neville was no better than a brute.

Mrs. Morley waxed very indignant on hearing this disastrous piece of intelligence. She determined (her husband having departed to Leadenhall Street) to post off to Millicent's immediately, and know the rights of the story; and if it were true (and she had her own mis-

givings upon the subject), she was determined her Millicent should have justice done her.

"A wretch," muttered she, as she hastily invested herself in her best velvet cloak, bonnet, and gown, "to take advantage of her innocence in this way! But I'll be even with him, or my name is not Catherine Morley!"

As no one could presume to affirm that her name was not Catherine Morley, seeing that she had been formally married in St. Pancras Church, she seemed likely in her own opinion to have the best of the argument with Mr. Neville, and she arrived in Brook Street in a high state of self-gratulation.

She found Millicent in a state of most graceful repose, perfectly and tastefully dressed, her music open, drawings, books, scattered about, all betokening the tastes of her fair young daughter; and her priceless grandson, great in his glory, playing remorselessly with his mother's gold chain.

Mrs. Morley was rather taken aback. She had come to counsel everything that was fierce and warlike; but the peaceful, nay, contented, happy appearance of her daughter, disarmed her of her wrath.

After the usual fond greetings had been exchanged—the young Clarence transferred to his grandmamma's lap, all her sisters properly asked after—Millicent resumed her seat, and began chatting on indifferent subjects.

But Mrs. Morley recovered herself ere she had sat long; all her previous suspicions were again in full force as she noticed that Millicent never mentioned her husband's name, and determining like a skilful general to surprise her daughter into an avowal of the truth, she turned round and abruptly asked:—

"How is Mr. Neville? I have not seen him for an age."

Millicent blushed painfully; it was the impulse of the moment, and she could not help it, though the next minute she would have given worlds not to have done so, for she saw both suspicion and curiosity in the glance her mother turned upon her. She read in it that her mother had come down to satisfy her doubts. However, she speedily rallied, and said quite cheerfully:—

"Oh! Eustace is gone as usual, first to his club, and then on to the City. You know," forcing rather a sickly laugh, "I never see him till dinner-time."

"Millicent," said Mrs. Morley, solemnly, not deigning to notice her daughter's frivolous way, and which she felt was intended as a mere put off; "Millicent, answer me truly, for I am your mother and have a right to know: do you and your husband live together on affectionate terms as husband and wife should, or do you not?"

If Millicent had blushed a rosy red before, she now flushed up a deep scarlet; averting her gaze from her mother's steadfast glance, she essayed to speak, but the words died on her lips.

"I see how it is," said Mrs. Morley, in a low tone of suppressed anger. "My poor, poor child!"

"Oh, mother, don't pity me! please don't!" cried Millicent, hastily, "there is no cause for pity, I assure you. Whatever you may have heard of my husband's or my own way of life, be assured of one thing—I am satisfied."

"How can you say so, Millicent?" returned her mother, downright cross that she would not confide in her. "How can you talk in that ridiculous manner? Do you hope to cheat your own mother? No, indeed! I know all as well as if you told me;

and, Millicent, that husband of yours is a wretch!"

"Hush, mother!" said Millicent, mildly, now fairly composed again. "Speak not so, I beseech you; it hurts me—it wounds me! .... No, do not interrupt me, nor think me ungrateful; but, mother, my mind is made up: come weal, come woe, I will never sit by and hear my husband disrespectfully spoken of. I am happy—I am satisfied—and that is enough."

"Happy! Oh, Millicent! how can you be happy, if all I hear is true? Why not confide in me at once, and see what your father or I can do towards making matters straight?"

Millicent shuddered. Her father or mother interfere between her and her husband! The thought was despair. Earnestly, and with her very soul beaming out of her eyes, she arose, approached her mother, knelt down beside her, and laying her hand upon her boy, said, impressively:—

"Mother, I beseech you—nay, adjure you—if you love me, to ask no questions! Interfere not between me and my husband! Nothing has gone wrong between us of any

importance; and, if left alone, I shall soon make things smooth: and should I not succeed, then I promise you, if I do want aid or succour, I will come to you."

Mrs. Morley looked at her daughter steadfastly, and saw that she was in earnest. Sighing regretfully, for she knew from experience that Millicent was not to be turned, when once she had made up her mind, she said, stroking her glossy hair fondly:—

"Well, I suppose you must be allowed to have your own way; you were ever a wilful bairn, Millicent."

"Thank you, mother! Thank you, my own dearest mother!" exclaimed Millicent, kissing her rapturously. "And now tell me all the news. How's Cherry? and when do Rose and Kate come home from school?"

Mrs. Morley was easily pacified and deceived by her daughter's cheerful look and manner, and set old Hannah down in her private mind as a stupid gossip, who had been imposed upon by that fly-away minx, Mrs. Thompson; and so, as she was at heart inordinately proud of her handsome son-in-law, she was glad enough to think it was all right,

and entered upon her budget of domestic news with great gusto.

"I expect the girls home on the fifteenth; and they have written to ask if they may invite a schoolfellow of theirs to spend a day or two with them—quite a prodigy, they say! got such a voice!—and a deal that I can't recollect: but you will be able to judge for yourself; for, of course, you come to us New-year's Eve for the Christmas-tree party?"

"Oh, yes!" said Millicent, confidently; for her husband had only that morning, at breakfast, desired her to accept all her mother's invitations, and expressed his willingness to accompany her.

Mrs. Morley was satisfied, and continued:—

"The girls tell a funny story about this young lady; something about her mother dying, and a very rich old gentleman adopting her."

"Indeed!" said Millicent, carelessly. "Who is she?"

"I don't well know; they call her Violet — Violet — something. I can't recollect what," returned her mother.

"Don't trouble yourself; her name does

not signify. "I shall like to hear her; and so will Eustace: for he is passionately fond of good music, especially singing."

"Mrs. Melville is coming, too; so we shall have a full house," returned her mother.

"I am truly glad to hear that. I quite long to see her. Poor old Harry! Who would have thought of her marrying?"

"Ah! who, indeed!" observed Mrs. Morley; "but stranger things than that happen in the world. Who would have thought of your marrying for love, as you did? And now, not three years over your head, and you a slighted wife! As well be a widow, for the matter of that!"

"Oh, hush mother! hush!" cried Millicent; "remember your promise."

"Ah! well, Millicent, it will take all my love for you to make me remember it, I can tell you; for when I think upon it, I could tear him to pieces:" with which charitable observation she shortly after took her leave.

Christmas came, and with it the girls and boys; and Millicent heard, on all sides, accounts of the wonderful and gifted little stranger. She was not at Guildford Street when Millicent went there to dinner on Christ-

mas-day. Her adopted father could not spare her; and her absence was a great disappointment to the juveniles.

"She is to come here for New-year's Eve, and stay over New-year's Day; so you will see her then," cried Rose.

"Well, I own I shall not be sorry," observed Millicent. "You have told me such wonderful stories of her, that my curiosity is quite roused."

"She isn't much to look at," said Mrs. Morley. "She's small, and very dark; I should say, something of a half-caste."

"Oh, no, mamma!" cried all the girls in a breath; for in their minds, the word half-caste was associated with the old dark crossing-sweeper, and they naturally thought that a great let-down in the world for their favourite.

"Oh, you needn't fire up so, and look so indignant at my comparing her to a half-caste!" said their mother. "I have seen some beautiful women, born of coloured parents: haven't you, Mr. Morley?"

"Yes," said her husband. "But I think the little child you are speaking of has more of an Italian cast of countenance."

"She is not a child!" said Josiah, loftily, who, radiant in an outfit procured from a tailor of Eustace's recommendation, considered himself a fashionable young man; and, as he had condescended to bestow a little notice on the young Violet, did not relish hearing her spoken of in that juvenile manner.

"I think papa is right," observed Cherry, "about Violet's being more of an Italian than Indian descent. She has many Italian attributes, internally as well as externally — a beautiful voice, and, if I mistake not, a very haughty temper."

"Yes, she is generally reckoned very proud," said Kate; "but she never shows any pride to us, and, I can see, is very fond of mamma."

"I wonder who isn't!" said Millicent, fondly; "and so kind as mamma is to children, too!"

"Law bless their little hearts!" said Mrs. Morley, good-naturedly; "what's the use of being cross with the poor things? They'll have trouble enough, they may be sure," and she glanced furtively at Millicent, "whenever they come to be men and women."

Millicent blushed, for she knew that that

remark was aimed at her, and occasioned by Eustace's not dining with them as originally promised. Mrs. Morley was excessively put out by his non-appearance; for, like Mrs. Primrose of glorious memory, she liked to have all her family round on great occasions: and Millicent could scarcely refrain from smiling as she thought, if her mother did but know that the reason Eustace was not there was because he was spending the evening in company with Mrs. Vere and a choice party of intimate friends.

Her husband had announced, the day before, his regret that he should be unable to accompany her to Guildford Street. He had, however, placed the carriage entirely at her disposal, and begged she would not trouble herself on his account in any way.

To this arrangement Millicent had no alternative but quiet acquiescence; and, to tell truth, she was not over-sorry. Except for her mother's disappointment and the renewal of her suspicions, Millicent was positively glad; for Eustace's presence, generally speaking, instead of adding to their happiness, cast a sort of restraint over the whole party.

The younger fry had long ceased to look

upon him with pleasure; for though he was as liberal as ever with presents and boxes for the theatres, and all that sort of thing, yet, as he never felt at ease himself when in Guildford Street, his manners were so studied and sarcastic, that they felt positively afraid of him.

Therefore, Millicent found his absence rather a relief than otherwise, and she had begun to consider his being with Mrs. Vere such a thing of course, that it almost ceased to trouble her.

She would not have known it but for his own carelessness; for though Mrs. Thompson, through Mr. Ward, had been aware for above a week that her master was going to dine with that impudent Mrs. Vere, she knew it was as much as her place was worth to communicate the intelligence to her mistress.

Millicent learnt the fact by mere accident. Her husband dropped the note out of his pocket as he was leaving the room, and the little Clarence, who was navigating his way round the breakfast-table, picked it up, and unrolling it, brought it in great glee to his mother.

She took it, thinking he wanted it straight-

ened out. As she did so her eyes fell upon her husband's name, coupled with language which, if passionate, was certainly not choice. She read on, urged by invincible curiosity, and her pure mind sickened with disgust as she thought what a degraded taste Eustace must possess, even to tolerate a woman capable of writing such an epistle. She had yet to learn, that what a man tolerates in a woman he takes to gratify the fancy of an hour, is very different from what he would care to see in his wife.

She did not know this, and a feeling very like contempt for her husband began to take possession of her heart.

She acted on the impulse of the moment. Straightening the letter out, she folded it neatly up, and enclosing it in a blank envelope, directed it to her husband, and placed it herself upon his dressing-table. There he found it, and it widened the breach still further between them.

His wife knew all—had irrefragable proof that he had injured her. The injured may forgive, the injurer never. He felt humiliated in her presence; and because she was the cause of that humiliation, he hated her. That

is, as much as he could hate a woman that he loved in spite of himself.

But he positively grew so frigid in his manner, that he could scarcely bring himself to open his lips when they were alone; and as to the servants, Mrs. Thompson declared in solemn conclave that "master was just as if he had been put into the refrigator and hiced all hover."

Millicent kept her own counsel, and Mrs. Morley was happily unconscious of the fresh indignity put upon her precious child, and so the evening passed away in great gaiety; and Millicent felt, with a pang of self-reproach, that she was much happier without her husband than with him.

How often does a sense of unmerited unkindness do more towards alienating affection than actual injuries! Millicent forgave her husband the sin, but rebelled against being thus scornfully treated, because his own carelessness put her in possession of the truth.

He was not, therefore, in the sweetest of tempers when he got into the carriage to accompany Millicent to Guildford Street on New-year's Eve.

They went early. The guests invited to

meet them were not expected for nearly an hour; but Eustace, with his usual generosity, which not even his ill temper could subdue, had provided himself with gifts which he wished to distribute before the arrival of other visitors.

The sight of the old man-servant and old Hannah's joyous face thawed him a little. Their blessing on their young and lovely lady was so genuine, so sincere, that he could not help being touched; and their coupling his name with Millicent's implied that they at least were ignorant of how he had injured her, and the pleasant assurance that in some one's eyes, at any rate, he was thought something of, restored him to his old state of good-humoured gaiety, and he bestowed a handsome gratuity on each of the old retainers, along with some very hearty social words.

At the drawing-room door he met Mrs. Morley, and so softened was his mood that he actually kissed her, as a son-in-law ought to do. Millicent smiled fondly, and her face was lighted up with a half-expressed hope that, perhaps, the new year might prove happier than the old.

"And now," cried Eustace, after he had duly shaken hands with Mr. Morley, saluted

the two elder girls, and complimented Mrs. Melville on her improved appearance; "now that I am comforted with the assurance that you like the trifles I have brought you, I must find Rose and Kate to give them theirs; where are they?"

"They are in the next drawing-room, putting the last touches to the Christmas-tree," said Geraldine; "and Violet is there also. They won't mind your going in; so, come along:" and the lively girl threw open the folding-doors, crying out:—

"Room! room! my lords and ladies, we are coming—a goodly company—to wish you a happy new year!"

Millicent rested on her husband's arm, and fancied he slightly pressed her to his side. It might be only fancy, but it served to throw her into a glow of happiness she had not felt for some time. They led the way, the rest following.

A group stood round the loo-table in the middle of the room, which, covered with a snowy damask-cloth, bore in triumph the Christmas-tree. They were a pleasant sight, all eager, merry, laughing and talking, full of happiness, and jollity.

Violet stood with her back to the folding-doors as Geraldine threw them open and uttered her gay speech. She turned round, and her glance fell full upon Eustace, who, with Millicent upon his arm, was in advance of the rest. No sooner did she see him, than, dropping the flowers she held in her hand, she sprang towards him, exclaiming:—

"Papa! papa! dear, dearest papa! have I found you at last?" And, without another word, she threw herself into his arms.

All stood aghast. Millicent dropped her husband's arm, and looked the astonishment she could not speak, while the boys and girls stared in undisguised dismay.

Mrs. Morley glanced at Mrs. Melville, as much as to say, "You see!" and then moved to her daughter's side, prepared to defend and protect her, in case of need. Eustace alone was unmoved. Gently disengaging himself from the agitated girl, he said, quietly:—

"You do me great honour in calling me papa; but, alas! I have not the comfort of a daughter: a boy is all I can boast of!"

"Oh, papa!" said the child, simply, "don't joke in that way! You always would laugh; you know you would, and make game.

Poor mamma used to say so. Ah, poor mamma!" repeated the child, dropping her voice; "poor mamma is dead!" and she bent down her head and began to sob.

"Does anybody know what all this means?" cried Eustace, looking round him as if to seek an explanation of what apparently was puzzling him; but seeing a half-mistrustful smile upon everybody's countenance, he added, haughtily, "Who does this child belong to?"

"I don't know," answered Mrs. Morley, drily. Had she spoken her mind, she would have said, "To you, most probably!" But Violet heard the question, and wiping her eyes, she looked up and said, most composedly:—

"How can you ask such a thing, papa, when you know I am your little girl?"

"You make a mistake," returned Eustace, sternly. "I never saw you in my life before. I don't even know where you come from, or to whom you belong. I wish," added he, impatiently, "some one would clear up this ridiculous affair!"

The child cowered beneath his harsh, unbending looks. She trembled, and the tears gathered in her large, dark eyes, for her poor

mother's words recurred to her of how she was never married to her father; and thinking that, perhaps, he was ashamed of her, she stood silent. Then her proud spirit roused itself, and she broke forth in a deep, bitter voice, hardly knowing the sense of what she uttered:—

"You never married my mother! She told me so when you came to take me away from her! But I wouldn't have left her, that I wouldn't, to have gone with you! you cruel, cross papa! You killed my dear, dear mamma! She died because she was so poor, and worked so hard! and but for my dear god-papa, I should have died also. And I don't want you for a papa, and I won't have you! and I will go home to my dear god-papa, I will, and you may have your chain!" cried she, with a burst of childish revenge, as if giving up that chain broke all ties between them for ever and ever. "There!" taking it off her neck and throwing it at him; "there! mamma told me to hate you, and I do!" And so saying, she ran out of the room, followed by the girls, in a state of profound bewilderment.

A dead silence reigned for several minutes.

No one spoke, no one moved, except Mrs. Melville, at whose feet the chain had dropped. She stooped, picked it up, looked at it with a peculiar expression of face, and handed it to Millicent.

Millicent took it in her hand, and immediately recognised it as a fac-simile of one Eustace had bestowed upon her very shortly after their betrothal. Her heart turned over and over. Another tale of wrong and outrage! Still, she was his wife; and as she noted the cold, unbelieving looks of those around her, her soul melted into pity, and she put her arm through his, and said, softly:—

"There is some mistake here. Your little visitor has evidently taken Mr. Neville for somebody else."

"I hope it is so," said her mother, curtly. "Funny enough that there should be two persons in the world exactly alike! But I suppose, as you say," forcing a laugh, for she saw Eustace's brow overcast, and she had no mind to have her party upset, "Mr. Neville would know whether he has a daughter or not."

"Well, I should hope so," said he, composedly, and glancing down at Millicent with more softness than he had shown since their estrangement. "I am really much flattered

by Miss What-do-you-call-her taking a fancy to me, but am sorry I cannot reciprocate the admiration."

"It is very extraordinary," interposed Mrs. Melville, gently, seeing by Mrs. Morley's look of incredulity that that good lady was in a rabid state of unbelief, and quite outraged at what she would call Eustace's cool impudence. "It is astonishing what strange resemblances there are in the world!"

"Strange, indeed!" muttered Mrs. Morley, under her breath, but Millicent's imploring glances restrained her; and the party, feeling uncomfortable, retreated back into the front room, and, luckily, the other guests arriving, they went down to dinner.

The evening passed off tolerably, though Violet would not go near Eustace, and still persisted that he was her papa, but did not choose to own her, and not all Mrs. Melville's reasoning could shake her convictions. For Mrs. Melville, to find the truth out, if possible, for her darling Millicent, had purposely, when she came up from dinner, taken the child up into the old school-room to question her. Violet answered her politely, but still kept to her story.

"But, my dear child, if Mr. Neville is

your papa, he must have shown some sign of recognition, and you must own that he did not look as if he had ever seen you."

"Because he did not choose. My dear mamma told me, before she died, that papa was ashamed of me, for that he was not my legal papa, and, therefore, would never own me; and she told me," continued the child, her cheeks burning, her eyes flashing, "never to notice him, never to say I was his little girl, for that it was a great disgrace to me. But I forgot all about that when I saw him; for I did love him, very, very much!" And here her young spirit gave way, she covered her face with her hands, and sobbed bitterly.

Mrs. Melville was much affected with this unchecked proof of childish love, and hardly knew what to think. She cross-examined Violet, and made her tell the whole of her history; which she did in the most simple and deliberate manner, being much too inexperienced to feel it any disgrace having been in such poverty.

"And you are living with your kind benefactor now," said Mrs. Melville, mildly, when Violet had finished her narration; "and he it is who puts you to school, I suppose?"

"Yes," answered Violet, brightening up a little. "God-papa, as he bids me call him, is very fond of me, and says I am his dear little daughter, and he loves me dearly; and so does old Paulina."

"Who is Paulina?" asked Mrs. Melville.

"She was nurse to god-papa's daughter that died," answered the child, promptly; "and she loves me because I remind her of her."

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Melville, after a little reflection, "you ought to know; but I think you have made a mistake in fancying Mr. Neville is your papa. You are, perhaps, not aware that persons sometimes resemble each other very much, and may even be mistaken one for the other."

"Indeed!" said Violet, thoughtfully.

"Yes! there have been some very strange mistakes made owing to disputed identity—quite as strange, my little girl, as you have made to-night, for I feel persuaded yours is a mistake; for at the very time you say your papa came to you in Grove Street, Mr. Neville was engaged to be married to the young lady that is now his wife."

"Rose's sister," said Violet, quickly;

"but that is no reason why he should not be my papa. Mamma told me he was going to be married."

Mrs. Melville was again puzzled; but though puzzled, she did not think Eustace was the father of Violet. She had looked at him very intently while the child was speaking, and saw no symptoms of guilt or confusion in his countenance. That there was a mystery connected with Violet's strange accusation, she felt certain; and having heard from Mrs. Morley the whole story of Millicent's wrongs, her clear judgment told her that the sooner that mystery was cleared up the better.

Late at night, when the visitors had all departed, Violet was had down, and told Mr. Morley and his wife exactly what she had repeated to Mrs. Melville; and she related all about her past life with such unwavering steadiness, that they began to think she must be in the right.

The story tallied well. The man's wish to send Violet's mother abroad—her being a Quadroon—a strange, inexplicable likeness that the child bore to Eustace,—all seemed to carry conviction to their souls; and as he had not a previous good character to come to his aid,

but rather the reverse, they made up their minds that at any rate it was a case of great suspicion.

Millicent, meanwhile, went home with her husband in an odd frame of mind. She was half-convinced of the truth of the child's statement; but, strange to say, could not help pitying her husband, stigmatised as he had been by so public an exposure, and her heart yearned towards him with renewed tenderness.

Eustace was, outwardly, the most unmoved of the whole party. He never opened his lips to Millicent during the drive, but bid her good-night as usual, and went off to his room as quietly as if the name of Violet Newton had never been pronounced in his hearing.

Millicent undressed with a heavy heart. She had not begun her new year propitiously. Her husband had parted from her more coldly than before. To have judged from his manner, any one would have thought that Violet had been laid at her door instead of his.

CHAPTER II.

A STRANGE PHASE OF LIFE.

VIOLET'S appearance at Mrs. Morley's may be easily accounted for. Signor Martelli had found, after a long trial, that her education with a daily governess did not progress as rapidly as he wished; that the old Paulina's well-meant, but injudicious indulgence, was injuring the child, both mentally and bodily; and sorely as he grieved at parting with her, for she had already begun to wind herself round his heart-strings, he determined to send her to a good finishing-school.

He had been recommended, by one of those chances that happen in real life, to the same school which Mrs. Morley had picked out for Blanche and Geraldine, and which satisfied her so much, that, regardless of the expense, both she and her husband had determined on sending Rose and Kate there.

Violet took up her quarters in her new home the same half as they did, and being pretty much of an age they struck up a warm friendship, which at last extended itself to an invitation to her from Mrs. Morley to come and spend the holidays in Guildford Street along with her young companions.

This, however, Signor Martelli would not hear of. He thought it hardship enough the being obliged to part with the child, who had now become quite the darling of his old age, to go to school; but then, as he remarked, that was for her good, and he could not be so selfish as to do otherwise. But as to parting with her during the holidays, the thing was quite out of the question.

In this her first friend, the kind-hearted Dr. Jones, perfectly agreed; and as to his boys, her old playfellows, they declared it impossible to part with her even for an hour; and Evan, who came morning and night under some pretence or other, was quite pettish if he only heard Guildford Street named.

"Oh, Evan! how can you be so cross," cried Violet to him, "and say such spiteful things against Rose and Kate? Such nice girls,

too! I am sure you will like them very much whenever you see them."

"I don't dislike them," returned he, moodily. "I only don't like their wanting to take you away;" and here he paused, for Mr. Evan did not choose to own that, with a precocity of feeling beyond his years, he was positively jealous of the handsome brothers that Rose and Kate were possessed of, and whom Violet talked so rapturously of when speaking to him. So that the next day, when Mrs. Morley, according to a strict promise made to the Signor, took Violet home, and to the great amazement of him and the old Paulina related the child's strange fancy in respect to Mr. Neville, Evan, who was there as usual to greet Violet on her return, could have danced with joy, that, owing to such a disagreeable *contretemps*, it would not be pleasant for Violet to visit in Guildford Street.

Signor Martelli quite concurred with Mrs. Morley in this view of the case, and after thanking her for her kindness to the child, asked for Mr. Neville's address.

"Not," said he, "that I want to find any relation that would be likely to rob me of what has now become the greatest comfort of

my life, but because I should really like to know the exact history of the child."

Mrs. Morley agreed that it was quite natural that he should do so, and giving him the desired address, departed, secretly hoping that her ill-conducted son-in-law would, spite of his wealth, meet his match and be found out.

"I knew," said Evan, as the Signor politely handed Mrs. Morley down to her carriage, "I knew no good would come of your Guildford-Street friends. I am so glad you are not going there again."

"Now why should you be glad," said Violet, half crying, "at what vexes me so? I am so sorry to think I shan't see Rose and Kate till I go back to school. And, after all, that gentleman may not be papa. He certainly did not seem to know me," added she, reflectively; "but then, he was so like papa."

"I dare say you were not mistaken," answered Evan, viciously; "and as to his pretending not to know you, why that was all of a piece with the rest of his conduct. I remember hearing papa say that he was quite a wretch—a monster—to have left your poor mamma as he did."

"Evan!" said Violet, and her childish form dilated in bitter wrath, "never speak so again, I beg of you. Whatever papa's faults are he is still my papa, and it is not proper of you to speak of him so to me, nor for me to stand by and hear you."

"I beg your pardon, Violet," said the penitent Evan, humbly. "I did not know you would be so offended. I thought you did not like your papa."

"No more I do, for being unkind to mamma," answered she; "but he always was very good to me, and used to call me his little Violet; and he gave me this chain the very last time I saw him," looking down at it: for, now that her childish anger had evaporated, the chain, which Mrs. Melville had picked up and restored to her, again graced her neck.

"Well, Violet, say you're not angry," pleaded her pitiful little lover, "and I promise never to speak of your papa again."

Violet extended her gracious forgiveness, and the Signor returning, Evan having no further excuse for remaining, very reluctantly took his leave.

"Violet, my child!" said the old man, as the door closed upon him; "Violet," and

he looked long and fondly into her dark, earnest eyes, "I am going to-morrow to see this gentleman, and have the matter investigated. Should it be really true—should he, indeed, turn out to be your father, will you leave me?"

"Leave you, dear god-papa!" exclaimed Violet, throwing herself into his arms. "Never! never!"

"Bless you, my darling!" cried the Signor, pressing her convulsively to his side. "Bless and keep you, my own child! It would break my heart to part with you now! You, the image of my lost Ada!"

"Am I so very like her?" said Violet, softly. "Ah! god-papa, were you not very unhappy when she died?"

"Yes!" said the old man, sorrowfully. "When I lost Eva, I lost all pleasure in this life; and until I had you, prayed to die. But I don't pray for death now," he added. "I trust I shall be spared many years yet; and that you and your children will help to close my eyes at last."

Violet kissed him tenderly. She did not know what answer to make to so sad a speech; but the part about her children struck her as

so funny, that her cheeks dimpled as she spoke.

"Oh, god-papa, how strange you talk! My children!"

"Yes! your children, my pet!" said he, stroking her hair fondly down. "Some day, perhaps, you won't think it so strange."

Signor Martelli had no trouble in obtaining an interview with Eustace, and that gentleman so fully convinced him that Violet's was only a childish fancy, that the old Signor returned to his home in comfort.

But things were not so easily made straight in Guildford Street. Mrs. Morley, prejudiced as she already was against Neville, was not to be convinced that Violet had made a mistake. And as Eustace would not deign to offer the explanations he had given to the Signor, the consequence was, that she made such irritating and injudicious remarks before Neville that it ended in an open rupture; and he positively forbade his wife entering her mother's doors again, or having any intercourse whatever with her own family.

This was a heavy blow to Millicent, but yet she would not murmur. She prayed for renewed strength and patience, and she found

them. Unrepiningly she did her daily duties, pursued the even tenor of her way, though she rarely ever now saw her husband, he absenting himself altogether; thus revenging, by unremitted slights to her, what he termed the unjust suspicions of her family.

Millicent was only too happy to think that they were unjust suspicions; too thankful to know that he had not the black crime on his conscience of having left the poor mother and her child to starve and die; so that she bore up better than she herself could have hoped for, and looked so quiet and contented, that at last Eustace grew alarmed lest she should end by becoming perfectly indifferent, and cease to care for him altogether.

He was very sore on this point; for, cherishing a deep, and, to himself, inexplicable love for her—a love he could neither explain nor understand, and worse, neither subdue nor crush out of his heart—it piqued his pride to the uttermost to see the perfect calmness with which she endured his slighting neglect.

Would she never speak? Could nothing he did rouse her? What would he not have given, if she would but have reproached him—nay, abused him—anything, so that he

could have caught at a word, and brought about a reconciliation!

He was the more anxious, too, because he found that his *liaison* with Mrs. Vere was beginning to be openly spoken of, and that many of their joint friends looked shy at him, and ceased to visit her altogether.

This alarmed him. He had no mind to have his character compromised and Mrs. Vere publicly cast upon his hands, and so cause an irremediable breach between him and his wife. He knew, that if once Mr. Morley had proof positive of the ill-treatment of his darling child, no power on earth would prevent his having justice done her; and there was that cursed Norman Austin ever ready at hand to stand forth as her champion.

For some unexplained feeling he had always disliked Norman. He had not the slightest suspicion of the truth, or that Norman had ever been in love with Millicent, much less had made her an offer; but he disliked him, though he was glad at his success: for Norman had devoted all the energies of his mind to the interests of his profession, and in an incredibly short time had risen to great note.

He was now one of the most eminent among the queen's counsel practising at the bar.

He had exchanged love for ambition.

Ambition was now his only mistress, and filled his whole heart. Millicent was not forgotten—was still religiously enshrined; but he so sedulously concealed her, and wrapt her up, that it was only at times he unveiled the picture.

He had heard the whole story of Millicent's unhappiness (or at least his aunt's suspicions) through his mother, who, translated from her miserable existence in the ladies' boarding-house, was now enjoying life as mistress of her son's house in Russell Square.

Norman's heart burned with indignation while he listened, but he was not surprised; it was only what he expected—what he had warned her would happen: but, though quite as anxious as her mother to see her righted, he still knew her character too well to interfere without her special permission, and it was mainly owing to his sensible advice that Millicent was allowed to go on in peace.

But Eustace felt that he despised him, and chafed under his ill-concealed dislike and contempt whenever they chanced to meet;

and this, added to the defection of one or two of his most valued friends, filled his breast with anxious speculations as to the future.

But if Millicent could only be brought, if even by stratagem, into contact with Mrs. Vere, the injurious rumours which were so rapidly gaining ground would be done away with.

Eustace racked his brain to find out how it could be brought about, and at last he hit upon a plan which he thought would answer exactly.

Time had, as I have observed, been rolling on, and the young Clarence was now a bright, lovely boy, very nearly three years old, with waving hair and long curls, and the pet and darling of every one who saw him.

Eustace was excessively proud of his boy; and as to Millicent, she worshipped him, and hardly cared to let him out of her sight.

Eustace knew how she adored the child, and thought he would turn it to advantage.

Accordingly, one morning at breakfast, he said, rather graciously:—

"By the by, Millicent (he never called her anything else), I fell in with old Mr. Cameron the other day, and he told me his

sister met you driving in the Park a short time since with the most glorious child she ever beheld; he asked if it were ours. I said I supposed it must be our sturdy young rogue that Miss Cameron had eyed so favourably; and the long and short of it is, he wants me to take you and the boy to dine with him in Curzon Street, on Tuesday, if you have no objection."

"I shall have great pleasure," returned Millicent, gently, her heart bounding with secret joy at her husband's almost affectionate way of addressing her.

"Then I will write and accept the invitation. He begged of me to apologise for his sister's not calling; but she does not live in London, and only comes up from Richmond now and then, when her brother has a party."

Millicent expressed herself perfectly satisfied, and Eustace left her. She knew Mr. Cameron by sight—had often heard her husband speak of him as being a very rich old bachelor, a West Indian, and a great friend of his late father.

The few days that intervened passed away more rapidly with Millicent than any since the fatal night of her discovery, and she almost began to hope that the time was not far distant

when her still prized, though faulty husband, might be brought to own that he was wrong, had repented, and would make her happy by consenting to a mutual forgiveness.

For Millicent knew that she needed forgiveness as well as the erring Eustace, for had she not shown a cold and bitter resentment?

Therefore it was with a heightened spirit that she dressed, and accompanied by her darling, set off for Curzon Street. She even did not think it strange that Eustace pleaded business of an urgent nature as an excuse for not returning to Brook Street to accompany her to Mr. Cameron's. But he promised to dress at his club, and be there ready to receive her.

Millicent most unsuspiciously acquiesced in this arrangement, and Eustace departed, highly gratified with having thus far succeeded so well with his project.

If Millicent could but have known that the reason he did not return was because he wanted to take Mrs. Vere, for whom he had procured an invitation, on first, she being only slightly acquainted with old Mr. Cameron, and not at all with his sister; for which reason he was anxious to introduce her previously to

Miss Cameron, and let her feel herself perfectly at home before Millicent made her appearance!

He counted on Millicent's shrinking, though sensitive spirit, for not making any outward show of dislike to Mrs. Vere; and as to what she felt, he was too desperate to think about it.

Seven o'clock came, and with it Millicent and her darling, who, being in high spirits at going out with his pretty mamma, chatted away, and made faithful promises of good behaviour, till they arrived at their destination.

Here she found Eustace anxiously awaiting her arrival; and it was with no little exultation that his eyes rested upon her exquisite beauty, and then upon that of the glorious child by her side, while a throb of gratified vanity thrilled through his soul at knowing that two such priceless creatures were all his own.

Proudly he led her up the room, amid the open gaze of admiration from the assembled guests; and so engrossed was she with her courtly host and his old-fashioned sister, that she did not perceive Mrs. Vere, who sat on a sofa a little in the background.

She had barely time, however, to answer Mr. Cameron's complimentary speeches—to shake hands with Miss Cameron—to hold her

boy up to be kissed, when she felt a tap upon her arm, and a mincing voice lisped out:—

"How do you do? How glad I am to see you! It is such an age since we met! And what a darling boy Clarence has grown!"

Millicent started as if a viper had stung her as Mrs. Vere's hateful voice rang in her ears, and turning short upon her husband she met his troubled glance, and comprehended the whole affair in an instant.

There are moments when whole years seem compressed into our being. Such a moment was this to Millicent: it gave the death-pang to any hopes she might have cherished of reconciliation with her husband, and as the events of the last few days flashed upon her burning brain, she felt such contempt at his duplicity that she could have crushed him under her feet.

But all this was but the reflection of an instant; disdaining to notice, even by a look, the wriggling, scraping, smiling Mrs. Vere, she turned to her husband, and said, point-blank:—

"Were you aware that Mrs. Vere would be here to-night?"

"Oh, yes!" interposed old Mr. Cameron,

innocently. "Did not you know that he had just brought her? I declare," pursued the old man, making her his most gallant bow, "that were it not impossible for any one possessed of such a treasure to have eyes for another, I should say you had a right to be jealous."

"I have long ceased to be jealous," returned Millicent, gravely. "But, Mr. Cameron, I must crave your forgiveness if I now take my leave. My husband will explain the reason why; he knew but too well that I would never willingly sit down in a room with Mrs. Vere."

"Nobody wants you!" burst forth Eustace, almost inarticulate with rage, as he saw his fine plan blown into atoms, and himself more the subject of conversation than ever. "If you do not know how to control your cursed jealousy better than by openly insulting a lady like Mrs. Vere, the best thing you can do is to go home."

"Just what I mean to do," returned Millicent, calmly; and curtseying very reverently to her astonished host, she suffered the infuriated Eustace to lead her and her child out of the room.

When they got down-stairs of course the carriage was gone, and a cab had to be fetched, during which time the husband and wife being alone, Eustace poured out upon her the full vials of his wrath. Unheard of were the things he would do: he would make her repent to her last hour the words she had just uttered. He would take her child—that he would—and Mrs. Vere should bring him up to hate her: he would make her rue her behaviour in dust and ashes.

Millicent listened with the feeling of one grown desperate by despair and a continuation of ill-fortune. Perhaps he would do all he threatened, but she could not help it if he did. One thing she knew, that if he deprived her of her child it would break her heart, and then she would be sooner out of her misery: and, almost indifferent as to what was to become of her, she answered, sorrowfully enough:—

"I do not dispute your power, Eustace, but I will not judge you so harshly as to believe you will perform what you now utter in the heat of passion. And after all, it is no one's fault but your own. I told you I would never speak to Mrs. Vere—never hold any

communication with her, if I could avoid it. Had she been invited here without your cognizance, I should have pleaded sudden indisposition, and left the room. But as it was a preconcerted plan, and you brought her here purposely to insult me, I was determined to speak the truth!"

"And dearly that truth shall cost you!" returned the angry man. "You shall learn what it is thus openly to brave my authority!"

Luckily for Millicent the cab was now announced, and he hurried her and the child into it. He made an attempt to keep the boy, but Clarence clung so close to his mother, and Millicent held him with such a firm grasp, that, dreading another scene, he reluctantly gave way, and saw them depart with feelings more like those of a demon than of a man.

However, there was nothing to be done but to put the best face he could upon the matter, and returning up-stairs he found Mrs. Vere doing that already—expressing, with an air of childlike innocence, her inability to comprehend what fancy Mrs. Neville could have taken into her head. What could she

mean? She never could be jealous of such a devoted husband as Eustace; and as to being jealous of her, it was too preposterous—it was! Why, they were like brother and sister! It was quite shocking — quite monstrous — to suspect anything between them! She pitied him from her heart. Poor fellow! what a horrible life to be tied to a jealous wife!

All this was lisped out in the most natural manner possible, and the other guests, who were dying for their dinner, which had been delayed by this unlucky *contretemps*, thought it better, whatever their private opinions, to take the explanation in good part, and agree that Mrs. Neville must be under the influence of some extraordinary delusion; for of course, if they had adopted the belief that Mrs. Neville was in the right, they would have had no alternative but, like her, to have refused to sit down with Mrs. Vere.

Now, as this was the last thing that could be expected from a company of hungry people, they all politely agreed that it was an unaccountable mistake—took Eustace's apologies in good grace—bid him think nothing about it—and, finally, took part with Mrs. Vere,

who, in a transport of joy and exultation, went down to dinner hanging on his arm.

For a time, sin prevailed and virtue was crushed.

But Millicent's prayers and tears were ascending to the throne of Him who has said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord!"

CHAPTER III.

A NEW RELATION.

As Eustace had positively forbid Millicent's visiting her own family, and as she was forced to deny herself the consolation friendship might have afforded her under her sufferings, for fear of betraying her husband, she passed day after day in such unvarying monotony that at last it began to tell upon her health.

Eustace carefully avoided her society. He seemed to have made up his mind to hold no further communication with her, and to take the bitterest of all revenges upon a woman—that of compelling her to silence.

She grew thin, and her delicate complexion began to assume an almost unearthly transparency, but Eustace did not heed it; he was too wrapt up in himself, too determined to make her feel the full weight of his displea-

sure, to pay any attention to her outward appearance.

So Millicent pursued her way uncomplainingly, and in her frequent notes to her mother never hinted that she was wearing her young life away in silent and unavailing regrets; and had she pursued this way of life much longer, I fear my story would have had to come to a very abrupt termination.

But, luckily, an unexpected circumstance occurred, which gave a complete revulsion to the feelings both of herself and her husband.

One morning, having come down rather late, she found Eustace busily employed in reading what looked like a foreign letter. He seemed puzzled and perplexed by its perusal, and turning it over several times, took it up, and at last said: —

"I have just received this from an uncle of mine—one whom I have never seen—hardly knew the existence of. I knew my father had a brother, but, from some disagreement in early life, they never saw or spoke to each other; even when my father died this uncle took no notice of the event. Now he writes to me; says that he is in England—in London —and would like to see me."

"How very singular!" said Millicent, quite charmed to hear of anything that might serve to turn Eustace's thoughts into a fresh channel. "You will, of course, go and see him, and ask him here?"

"Of course. I shall call upon him this very morning, and if not disagreeable to you, should like to offer him a home here during his stay in London."

"Pray do, by all means," answered Millicent, cheerfully; "I shall be most happy to do everything in my power to make him comfortable."

"Then I will invite him to come directly," said Eustace, in a softened tone, pleased with the alacrity with which his wife acceded to his wishes.

"I will order his room to be prepared immediately. Shall you bring him back to luncheon with you?"

"I think so; that is, if he will come: but, you know, I have never seen him," taking up the letter, and reading from it. "He says business of a painful nature has thus brought him to England in his old age, and he hopes that I shall be able to assist him."

"That I am sure you will," returned

Millicent, affectionately, forgetting all past disagreements, on once more hearing his voice sound in its natural tones.

"I am much obliged to you for your good opinion," answered Eustace, in his usual freezing manner; and poor Millicent, who was just beginning to revive with renewed hope, sank again.

He rose, and taking up his letters, left the room.

Millicent looked after him, and her eyes filled with tears. "It is very hard," she murmured to herself, after a pause; "but it is no fault of mine. I would humble myself to the dust, but he won't let me."

Oh, Millicent! Millicent! why did you not crush your pride, and ask him fairly and frankly to make it up with you?

Conscience whispered this in her ear many times, for Conscience is a very plain-spoken friend; but she, as Agrippa said unto Paul, put the answer off to "a more convenient season."

However, she would not indulge herself in useless fretting; so rising, she rang the bell, and gave the necessary orders.

Eustace did not return till just before

luncheon-time, bringing his uncle with him. He was a quiet, sorrow-stricken old man, rather strange and foreign in his appearance, but high-bred and courteous in his manners.

Millicent was struck at the wonderful resemblance between her husband and his uncle; it was so striking, that it would have led a casual observer to have set them down as father and son. She could not help noticing it.

"Yes," returned Mr. Neville, "I was struck myself at the strong family likeness. He is the image of my son when I last saw him."

"You have a son, then?" said Millicent, earnestly, her thoughts recurring as if by magic to the little girl at her mother's on the New-year's Eve. "Is he in England?"

"I hope so," returned Mr. Neville fervently. "I shall have made a long voyage in vain if he is not."

"My uncle has come to England on purpose to trace out his only son, whom he fears has got into some trouble," observed Eustace. "I know what you are thinking of, Millicent, and strange to say, my thoughts ran in the same channel when I heard my

uncle cry out at the wonderful resemblance between me and my cousin."

"And what were your thoughts?" said Mr. Neville, anxiously. "Have you any clue, anything which would help me to trace poor Eustace?"

"Eustace!" exclaimed husband and wife at once, and exchanging glances, for both remembered how pertinaciously Violet had protested that her papa's name was Eustace.

Mr. Neville noticed the look of intelligence which passed between them, and said, imploringly,—"Oh, if you have the slightest knowledge of what has become of him, tell me!"

"Well, it can hardly be called knowledge," answered Eustace, "only a strange coincidence which I will relate to you. Last New-year's Eve we spent the evening with my wife's family, and a little girl, a schoolfellow of her sisters, did me the honour of protesting that I was her papa; and as that was most certainly not the case, when I heard to-day that I have a cousin exactly my counterpart, it has struck me that the child was deceived by the resemblance."

"More than probable," said Mr. Neville,

now all in a tremble of excitement. "For God's sake tell me where this child is to be found!"

"Don't agitate yourself," returned Eustace, kindly. "I assure you we are as ignorant as you are to whom the child belongs. But come now, take some luncheon, and afterwards I will tell you all I know."

Millicent added her entreaties, and the old gentleman, to please them, sat down and tried to eat: but the effort was too much, he could not swallow a morsel; and pushing his plate from him, he laid his head upon the table and sobbed aloud.

Millicent and her husband were both excessively distressed, and tried to soothe him into something like composure, and after the first violent emotions were over he grew more calm, and listened attentively while Eustace related distinctly the whole of what had taken place in Guildford Street, and also what he had learnt of Violet's history from Signor Martelli when that gentleman called in Brook Street.

"And does this Signor Martelli live in London?" inquired Mr. Neville, anxiously; "and if so, can I see him?"

"Of course you can," returned Eustace. "He lives close by,—not a quarter of an hour's drive from hence. Come, cheer up: depend upon it we shall find out the whereabouts of the lost sheep."

Mr. Neville smiled faintly, but thanked his nephew with an affectionate earnestness that won Millicent's heart. She already began to love the old man.

"Now," said Eustace, after his uncle had taken some wine and swallowed a mouthful of something to eat, "now we will go to Signor Martelli's, and hear all he has to say. And, Millicent, my uncle's black man, Hector, will be here soon with the luggage; will you let Thompson see that everything is made comfortable for him, and tell Ward that I put him under his special charge?"

Millicent promised obedience; and the uncle and nephew departed on their quest, mutually pleased with each other.

Millicent felt as if a heavy load had been suddenly lifted off her soul,—it was as if a new life were infused into her veins; and it was with something of her old gay-hearted spirit that she gave the necessary orders for the insuring of Mr. Hector's comfort, and

prepared Clarence to be a good boy and love his new uncle.

She was dressed for dinner, and in the drawing-room, before they returned; and from their being detained so late, she was in hopes that something might lead, not only to the discovery of her cousin, but to the clearing up of her husband's character.

And on this point Millicent was most anxious that the story should be explained; for she knew that Eustace, like the fox in the fable, had such a bad character in Guildford Street, that if any one had stepped forward and accused him of murder, Mrs. Morley would have believed it.

She waited anxiously, therefore, for them to make their appearance. To her great delight Eustace came first.

"Well," she said, earnestly, "have you discovered anything fresh?"

"Not much; we found the Signor at home, but he knows no more of the child's parentage than we do. However, he was most frank and open upon the subject, and told all he knew in return for my uncle's confidence; and to-morrow we are going with him to Clerkenwell, to see Mr. Jones, the

doctor, in hopes by his aid to be able to trace out the house in Green Street where the woman formerly lived.

"What did your uncle tell Signor Martelli? Has he any particular reason for coming to England?"

"None whatever, beyond the mere fact of seeking and reclaiming, if possible, his unhappy son. It seems from what I can gather," pursued Eustace, in a cordial, confidential tone of voice, "that this boy Eustace (funny enough he should have the same name as myself) is to his father what I was to mine—an only child; and like me," he added; a little bitterly, "not good for much. He was educated here in England; and at eighteen returned to the West Indies. There, it seems, he led a sad life; wouldn't stay at the plantation; got into bad company, and committed all sorts of excesses; and, to sum up all his offences, one fine morning abducted a beautiful Quadroon girl, the affianced wife of his most intimate friend, and started off for England; so, doubtless, if he is the father of Violet, she was the mother."

"What a long time ago this must have happened!" said Millicent; "for Violet is thirteen.

Has your uncle never seen or heard of his son for fourteen years?"

"Oh, yes: he has been backwards and forwards several times, but for the last four years he has lost all sight of him; and unable any longer to endure the suspense, determined to come to England and seek him out, if possible."

"How did he live all this time? Did he follow any profession?"

"None whatever. He was in the habit, when he wanted money, of applying to his father's agent; and he had orders to honour his checks to a certain amount. It is because he has not applied there, nor drawn any money, that his father's suspicions became awakened, and he came over."

"I should be afraid he was dead," said Millicent, sadly.

"Very likely. However, I shall do all in my power to assist in the discovery; as, should he turn out to be Miss Violet's papa, I presume the honour will be lifted from my shoulders."

"A thing I am most anxious for—not that after the first night I ever believed a word of it; and so I told mamma."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you for taking my part," his old sarcastic manner coming over him again. "Doubtless you thought me so bad, there was no need to make me out worse?"

"Oh, Eustace!" but here the door opened, and Mr. Neville entering, Millicent lost her opportunity.

The remainder of the evening was spent in discussing the various plans, and considering which would be best for tracking out the other Eustace, and discovering, if possible, whether any relationship existed between him and Violet.

Eustace was for obtaining the aid of a detective; but to this his uncle objected.

"I would willingly do so, my dear nephew, if it were you I was in search of; for your character would bear investigation."

"I don't know about that," observed Eustace, drily. "You had better ask my wife what she says upon that head."

The colour mounted to Millicent's cheeks, but she answered sweetly:—

"Your wife will say, what every woman ought to say of her husband, that she took him for better for worse, and is quite satisfied!"

"A Judas-like answer!" sneered Neville.

"Nay," put in his uncle; "a very pretty answer, I think! What more would you have than for your wife to be satisfied with you? That's a character any man may be proud of."

"More than I am," muttered Eustace, in a low voice, and scowling at Millicent.

She cast down her eyes, not knowing how to break the disagreeable silence. Luckily, old Mr. Neville was too much absorbed in his own sorrows to notice anything particular between the husband and wife, and he went back to the subject nearest his heart quite naturally.

"You see, the man from whom Eustace (I had better call him by his second name, Louis," observing Millicent start) "took the Quadroon, was a great friend of his at the time. Nothing can justify that deed, because Mr. Kingston would have married the girl—and he is one of the richest planters in the island—and was very kind to him. Since that time he and Louis have been deadly enemies. And Mr. Kingston has spared no pains to blacken my Louis's character, and make him out worse than he really is. Mr. Kingston came to

England four years ago; and, God forgive me! but sometimes I cannot help linking my son's disappearance with that circumstance."

"You don't think he would do him any personal harm?" said Millicent, fearfully.

"God alone knows!" returned Mr. Neville.

"More need then to put the police upon his track," said Eustace. "If he be upon earth, I warrant our detectives will ferret him out."

Still, old Mr. Neville objected; and the conference broke up, Eustace promising to go with him to Clerkenwell the very first thing the next morning.

CHAPTER IV.

A FRUITLESS SEARCH.

THE next morning, the moment breakfast was over, the two gentlemen departed on their mission; whither we will follow them, leaving Millicent firmly but sadly convinced, that her husband had imbibed a deep-rooted aversion to her, and that nothing she could say or do would ever serve to overcome his dislike.

She, therefore, resigned herself calmly to her fate; and at the mature age of two-and-twenty decided that the world and its pleasures were over as far as she was concerned, and that all she had to live for was her boy. For she never really believed that Eustace would put his threats into execution, and deprive her of her child.

And the boy was certainly worth living for. He was one of those bright, brilliant, seraphic children, who seem sent into the

world for some special purpose, but who retain so large a portion of their angelic nature, that the danger is, that they may be drawn back to the celestial region from whence they came, and after a short sojourn in this world of sorrow, return back to the God who only lent them for a time.

His temper was one of unvarying sweetness, and his love for his mother was almost beyond his years. He was also very fond of his father; and, to do Eustace justice, certainly there never was a tenderer parent. He was the heavenly link which, unknown to either, kept the hearts of his parents still riveted to each other.

"Eustace is the father of my boy, my precious boy!" would Millicent murmur, fondly stroking down the child's golden ringlets. "How I long to tell him that I have repented me of my anger long ago! Oh, that he would but ask for my forgiveness!"

Eustace read Millicent's soul in Clarence's sweet eyes, and his heart involuntarily softened towards her.

"Why," would he often mutter to himself —"why does she look so distant, so frigid?

Who would think that such a fond, loving, doting being, could have such an iron will?"

Such were their reflections; the boy alone saved them from despair.

And only that very morning Millicent had seen, with a feeling of proud delight and maternal love, the admiration her darling excited in old Mr. Neville, and watched with ecstasy the pride Eustace took in his boy.

"I like my new uncle," lisped Clarence, when, after they were gone, he came to have a play with his mother. "He has promised to give me a horse to ride upon."

"What a rich man you will be!" returned Millicent. "But, Clarence, you have got a pony already."

"Yes, mamma; but then I shall have two, and can lend you one."

"And poor papa, too," added Millicent jealously, fearful lest the child should not love his father as much as herself, and Eustace should accuse her of setting his boy against him.

"Yes! and papa too," returned he. "But," added sagely, "papa has got a horse, and you have not."

Millicent smiled at this proof of the child's precocious observation; but she sighed also as

she remembered, that though she had a horse, she never mounted him. Eustace never once invited her to take a ride, and she would not join any other party.

But we must leave her to her boy, and follow her husband and his uncle to Signor Martelli's.

When they arrived in Weymouth Street they were ushered into the drawing-room, where they found the Signor and Violet awaiting them. She had been fetched home from school the previous evening, and now stood, with a dark and anxious brow, close by the side of her adopted father.

He had told her the reason she was sent for from school, and she, now sincerely attached to him, had been imploring him, with all her childish energy, not to part with her.

"Part with you? No, my darling!" said the old man, fondly pressing her to his breast. "I trust in heaven I shall not have to part with you for many a long day yet: unless, you know, Violet, this gentleman should turn out to be your grandfather. You are aware, my child, that if he finds his son, and that son is your father, he can demand you of me."

"Can he?" said Violet, looking somewhat

frightened. "If I had known that I should not have been in such a hurry to call that other Mr. Neville papa. I am so very glad he turned out not to be so."

The Signor did not answer this speech of Violet's; he was not so sure of being as glad as she was, that she was not the child of Eustace, as in that case he felt pretty certain his claims were not likely to be interfered with. But this uncle of Eustace might prove a formidable rival. He was old, like himself, rich, and evidently doted on his lost and only child. Should Violet be proved to be the daughter of that erring, but well-beloved son, what chance had he of retaining her? None! Still the suspense was so dreadful, that he mentally resolved to do his best towards unravelling the mystery, and so end his doubts at once. Therefore, after the first salutations were over, he proposed that they should go on directly to Mr. Jones's.

"I wrote to him last night, explaining the object of our visit, and begged of him to make what inquiries he could."

Mr. Neville thanked him warmly, and then added, "This is Violet, I am sure; and I have only to look at her to feel certain she

is the child of my poor son: she is so unmistakably like him."

The poor Signor bowed assent, and taking Violet by the hand, said:—

"This is the gentleman, my child, that I told you of; and, if his suspicions are correct, your grandfather."

"I don't want any grandfathers!" said Violet, sturdily, and not moving an inch. Then, turning to the Signor, she threw her arms around him, sobbing out, "And I won't leave you, god-papa! I won't! I don't want to find papa! I don't want any one but you!"

Signor Martelli tenderly embraced her, and said, gently:—

"At present, Violet, we do not know that this gentleman is any relation; if he is not, he will have no wish to deprive me of you."

"Under no circumstances would I wish to deprive you of the child of your affections," returned Mr. Neville, deeply affected at Violet's innocent display of love towards her adopted father. "My son has already forfeited all claim by his cruel desertion of both mother and child. No! should it be proved beyond a doubt that this young lady is really the

daughter of my unhappy and misguided son, all that I shall ask will be permission to share a little in your labour of love."

This speech allayed the fears of the Signor; and Violet, finding that she was not to be dragged away *nolens volens* from her cherished god-father and dear Paulina, allowed herself to be kissed upon the supposition of a relationship, and vouchsafed all the information she had to bestow.

It was little enough. She knew nought beyond what the reader is acquainted with—had no relic, no scrap of anything towards proving her identity. The only thing she possessed was the chain, and that was useless, as being of modern date; and from the circumstance of Millicent's having one like it, evidently a common pattern, extensively circulated.

"I wonder," said Mr. Neville, as he examined it during the drive to Clerkenwell,—"I wonder if it would be possible to find out, by any private mark, where this chain was bought?"

"I should doubt it," said Eustace. "However, there will be no harm in asking a jeweller if there is a private mark upon it.

We will call at Hunt and Roskell's as we go home."

"But even if you could find out the jeweller who sold this, unless he personally knew your son, it would lead to nothing," remarked the Signor.

"At any rate we'll try. If it does no good, it will do no harm, and I cannot afford to lose the slightest chance," said Mr. Neville.

Mr. Jones was at home, and ready to receive them; and after the introductions were over, they went to the business they had on hand.

Mr. Jones gave a clear and succinct account of his being called in to attend Violet's mother; described her personal appearance, her pride, and the extreme poverty in which he found her; and ended by stating all the particulars of her death, and the removal of Violet to his house previous to the adoption of her by the Signor.

Mr. Neville listened attentively, but could make nothing new out of what he heard. The age of Violet tallied with the time his son took the Quadroon away from the island; but beyond that, and the decidedly strong resemblance

the child bore to the Neville family, he had no clue to guide him.

"Besides which," said plain, straightforward Mr. Jones, "I don't see that establishing a relationship between Violet and your son helps you the least in your search for him. He evidently took great care that her poor mother should have no notion of his whereabouts. She told me just before she died, when I represented to her the friendless state in which the poor child would be left, with nothing but a workhouse in store, that she could not help it; that if it were to save her life she could not tell where he was to be found; and that as to his name, she was bound by a solemn oath not to reveal it, and she did not."

"It is very unsatisfactory, certainly," sighed Mr. Neville.

"And if you were to establish the relationship," continued Mr. Jones, rather acrimoniously, for in his own private mind he considered this son of Mr. Neville's a thorough rascal, and disapproved of making any fuss about him, "it can make but little difference to Mr. Neville; for, of course, he would not think of depriving my old friend here of the child he has done so much for."

"God forbid, Mr. Jones," answered Mr. Neville, "that I should do anything so selfish! No! I have already told the Signor, that if this child is the offspring of my missing son, and something at my heart whispers that she is, I will never do anything so barbarous as to deprive him of her. No! all I ask, all I presume to claim, is permission to share in his labours."

The Signor was a good deal touched at this speech.

"We won't quarrel on that point," said he, kindly. "Instead of doing so, we will make a compact. She shall belong to both. Whoever dies first, leaves her to the other; and while she lives, she will have two to love her instead of one!"

"Now I call that fair and gentlemanly!" said Mr. Jones, approvingly; "and as I have but scant time to spare, perhaps you will excuse me, gentlemen. The Signor may not have explained to you," and his features relaxed into a slightly sarcastic laugh, "that I am the parish doctor."

"The public papers have already told us that, Mr. Jones," said Eustace, graciously (and Eustace could be very gracious when he

pleased). "I have read several times, in the accounts of inquests, of the humanity and skill of Dr. Jones."

The doctor bowed; he was a man of few words, and though he appreciated and liked Eustace's compliment, he was not the man to encourage any conversation about himself.

"Perhaps," said Dr. Jones, "you would like to see the woman, at whose house Violet's poor mother breathed her last?"

"I should, indeed," said Mr. Neville.

"Well, then, we will go." And, looking at Violet, he added:—"But there is no need to take that child with us," and he rang the bell.

"Ask Miss Jones to come here," said he to the servant who answered the bell.

Miss Jones, the old maiden sister to whom we have already been introduced, soon made her appearance, and after being formally named to the two Nevilles, was told where the gentlemen were going, and asked to take charge of Violet till their return: this, of course, she consented to do, and the four departed in Eustace's carriage.

The Nevilles and the Signor soon returned, not having gained any additional information,

nor any one being a whit the better for the visit, save good, honest Mrs. Wilby, upon whose acceptance the elder Neville had forced a five-pound note.

"I am sure, sir," cried the poor woman, quite overwhelmed with her good fortune, "I don't deserve or wish for any reward for what I did. Heaven above knows it was little enough, and it would be hard to think one wouldn't help a poor body who had no friends."

"And for your goodness to a poor thing who had no friends, God has sent a friend to reward you a hundred-fold," said Dr. Jones. "You know what He says about a cup of cold water, &c."

"Ah, sir," said the poor woman, gratefully, and looking fondly at him, "I am wrong in saying she had no friends, for she had you."

"She had better than me," rejoined the doctor, quickly: "she had God above. Know you not that He is ever the friend of the poor and miserable?"

He pronounced these words so solemnly that an awe fell upon his listeners. They were standing in the room where the poor,

frail, broken-hearted woman had drawn her last sigh. Old Mr. Neville looked round at the bare walls, the poverty-stricken bed, the crazy-footed table, the cracked glass, the scanty curtains, the patched carpets that anything but covered the discoloured boards, and a vision of Mr. Kingston's extensive plantation rose before his eyes. He looked back, as it were, into the memory of the past, and fourteen years vanished as in a dream. It seemed as if he could see distinctly Mr. Kingston's Indian home; the cool, Italian-built mansion, shaded by its clustering trees; the perfumed matted rooms, the birds of brilliant dyes, the delicious flowers; and he remembered that the Quadroon girl had drawn her first breath in that earthly paradise, had been tenderly nurtured and carefully educated, and that this Mr. Kingston, upon whose estate she had been reared, had offered her honourable marriage—had crushed his pride—had quelled his prejudices—had boldly and nobly stood forward a pattern to his compeers; and he remembered also, with a pang, such as the parent of a guilty child alone can feel, that but for his son, his unprincipled son, she would joyfully, gratefully, have accepted the good

offered to her, and perchance have been living now honoured and respected by all who knew her.

Alas! how had it all ended? As sin ever ends: in misery, in a broken heart, in desertion, finally in death.

Ah! with what a saddened, sorrowful, depressed spirit did Mr. Neville drive from the door!

And Eustace, did he draw no lesson from that melancholy death-stricken abode? No! for the wise man says, that some are so deaf to their own interests that "they will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely."

Eustace looked at that bare, miserable room, and a feeling of self-gratulation swelled his vain heart.

"What a wretch my cousin must have been to drive a woman to such extremities!" was his mental reflection. "If Millicent now had him for a husband, she might have something to complain of."

CHAPTER V.

THE PEACEMAKER.

Mr. Neville was not successful in his search. He took the chain to Hunt and Roskell's, but they could not find any private mark upon it, though they told him it was one of an expensive pattern, and from the purity of the gold and richness of the workmanship, bought, without doubt, at a good jeweller's. Following out that hint, he drove London over, and expended quite a little fortune in articles of jewellery, in his anxiety to find a clue, if possible, to the whereabouts of his lost son.

But his efforts were not crowned with success. In vain the chain was held up to the light, and subjected to the inspection of searching eyes and powerful magnifying glasses. No one could be found to recognise it as part of their stock, therefore no chance was afforded of finding out to whom they had sold it.

This done, and London well ransacked over, he advertised in the "Times." Any scrutiniser of the "Supplement" might have noticed for weeks and weeks a peculiarly worded advertisement, which, tending to drive the reader into a perfect fever of curiosity, was as plain as daylight to the person to whom it was addressed.

"But, no! that brought no better success, and spite of Eustace's untiring exertions, and he did his best, and Millicent's affectionate sympathy, the old man drooped at heart, as every day his hopes grew fainter, of ever getting tidings of his lost, and though unworthy, still dearly-loved son.

"If I could but be sure of his fate," said he, one morning at breakfast, "I should be resigned, even if I were to hear that he was dead. It is the suspense that is so dreadful."

"There is nothing to be done," said Eustace, decisively, "but to apply to the police: once put it into their hands, and, dead or alive, depend upon it they will fathom him out."

Mr. Neville shook his head in token of dissent. He could not make up his mind to resort to this extremity—an undefinable dread lest his son might have committed some crime

deserving condign punishment, and which caused him to conceal himself so effectually from his friends, made the father shudder at the idea of setting the police upon his track.

He did not explain his reasons, but Millicent, with a woman's usual tact, guessing pretty nearly what was passing in his mind, gently interposed.

"I think I understand why you so much dislike the idea of the police. Leading such a life as young Mr. Neville evidently has done, I think you are right not to cause any public inquiries to be made. Should he repent, and, anxious to lead a new life, return to his former position, it would be very disagreeable to reflect that he was known, and a complete register of his former deeds kept at every police-station in London."

"I did not think of that," observed Eustace, thoughtfully; and considering that he was a sort of twin-double to his cousin, and that some few of his own acts could not well bear the light, he ceased urging his uncle any more to apply to Inspector Field.

This was one of the many conversations that daily took place at breakfast-time, for every day Mr. Neville, generally accompanied

by Signor Martelli, started on some new expedition; for Violet had returned back to school, and the Signor was now a constant visitor in Brook Street.

The Nevilles liked him more and more, as every day showed some new trait of his kindness of heart and self-denial, and, open as the sun, they soon learned the whole of his history.

There was no mystery in it. He was, as has been remarked in a former portion of my story, an Italian, who had, years ago, astonished the musical world by his marvellous voice; had reigned supreme for some years; married a beautiful girl, to whom he was passionately attached before he made his *début;* had brought her to England, and lived a life of the purest happiness which it is ever given to mortals to enjoy in this wearying, working, transitory world; had had his day out; saw his sun set; gracefully took leave of the stage he had adorned, and the people who had adored him, before he had disgraced one or tired the other, and determined to return to the sunny South, there to enjoy the ease he had so honourably earned.

"*L'homme propose, Dieu dispose!*" The very week of his retirement, when all things

were arranged, his friends taken leave of, his worldly matters settled, Eva, the child, sickened with the scarlet fever; the mother nursed her, and ere a month was over his head, they were both resting side by side in Kensal Green Cemetery.

Great griefs usually produce great effects upon those who suffer from them. For months Signor Martelli walked about as in a dream—listless, inert, a lone melancholy man; the very pulses of his life seemed suspended, and, but for the devotion of the faithful Paulina, he would more than probably have sunk beneath the heart-absorbing pressure of his woes, and ended his days in a private madhouse.

She saved him. She watched over him, tended him, treated him as a sick child; aye, and rebuked him as such. She laid his meals regularly before him, and rated him soundly if he did not eat them, and by degrees his wounded heart was healed, and life, in its wrestlings with death, got the mastery, and once more he began to take an interest in what passed around him.

But nothing could induce him to go back to Italy; he fixed his lot in London, where he

had possessed his lost treasures, and where all that remained of them was within reach of access. And in time he grew calm, and, respected for his talents, and pitied for his misfortunes, he was beloved and welcomed by all who knew him.

And as the heart must have something wherewith to stay its inordinate cravings, Signor Martelli threw himself, heart and soul, into the cause of religion and charity. He visited all—the poor in their poverty—the suffering in their sorrows—the sinful in crime;—and to all he carried peace and comfort, and the knowledge of eternal life.

True, he was a Roman Catholic; but what avails the mere forms of religion when the heart is pure? Signor Martelli walked not this broad city to make either converts or perverts; he went simply in the name of his Heavenly Master, to do deeds of charity and love.

"In my Father's house there are many mansions." In those mansions shall be found the pure in heart, be they what religion they may.

It was in one of those errands of mercy that he became acquainted with Dr. Jones,

and they got mutually to like each other. The gentle softness of the heavenly-minded old man seemed to amalgamate, as it were, with the plain truth and good sense of the kind-hearted doctor. So they went hand-in-hand in their Master's work, and many a death-bed was soothed, and many a living household relieved, by the ever-open purse of the Signor Martelli.

My readers will not marvel, then, that such a man made his way with Millicent and the elder Mr. Neville; even Eustace, proud and sarcastic as was his wont, spared the old Signor. He was like an angel of mercy, and spread a healing influence wherever he went.

Millicent began to look up, and to cease repining at her fate. She saw a noble example before her, of how it is possible to be bereaved of all and yet live and be happy. She saw by actual demonstration, that in every sphere of life, under every misfortune, that one great blessing remained—the power of doing good. She profited by the lesson, rose like a phœnix out of the ashes of her past and present woes, and, instead of thinking she was doing God service by enduring life, determined to show

that she valued the gifts still remaining to her, by employing that life usefully. A sudden brightness fell upon her soul. She looked up out of the Slough of Despond in which she had sunk, and once more began to live.

By doing so she diffused a radiancy around her, and shared in the divine gift God has given to all His creatures—that of dispensing happiness to others.

She soothed old Mr. Neville's troubled spirit, sympathised with the old Signor's hidden griefs, and entering into their innermost feelings, became the bond of unity between them. One regarded her as a saint, and looked upon her with somewhat of the reverential affection which he bestowed upon a picture of the Madonna; the other thought her worthy the Master whose work she strove to do.

And her husband, he imperceptibly felt the change; and without knowing what caused it, grew more human under its influence. By degrees he thawed, came home more, occupied himself in domestic duties, and, under pretence of his uncle's business, spent most of his evenings in Brook Street.

How Mrs. Vere liked this, the course of

the story will unfold; and thus a great calm fell over the hitherto troubled waters of Millicent's existence.

She even accomplished the reconciliation of her husband and parents; that is, Eustace took off the ban, and, in company with her new uncle and the Signor, she once more visited in Guildford Street.

This was a great comfort to her affectionate heart; and as Mr. Morley laid his imperative commands upon his wife, not in any way to allude to the differences that existed between Millicent and her husband, her visits were a source of real enjoyment to her.

And this salutary state of affairs was produced by the precious example of a true servant of Christ.

Old, worn out, sad, and weary, hastening to the close of his mortal life, calmly waiting his Master's summons, he had dropped into that divided household like balm, and toned down the warring elements which composed it into a state of serene quietude.

Verily the old man had been a messenger of peace; and "blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall see God."

CHAPTER VI.

A FINANCIAL CRISIS.

THERE have been many commercial crises since the memorable year 1825, when all the country banks, with very few exceptions, broke and spread terror and panic through the length and breadth of the land. As I am writing of events that really did happen, I shall not specify the particular crisis of which I am going to speak.

It might have been the crisis in the year 1837, or that of '48; but though I won't tell you which it was, I will tell you which it was not. It was not that of '57—that crisis which, though it has passed over and left no visible traces of its presence, nevertheless laid some few of our proudest houses in the dust.

We are, as our Gallic neighbours irreverently call us, a nation of shopkeepers—a

term meant in derision, but in reality our greatest boast. Walk through the city of London—go into its long, narrow lanes—traverse the broad highways—take the privilege of Asmodeus, and enter the lofty dwellings that flank either side—mark well the vastness of the buildings, the wealth, the untold wealth, which each contains—each a city within itself, governed and subgoverned—note the unmistakable signs of mighty commerce in its proudest, its highest walks, and then tell the dancing Frenchman who calls us names, that without shopkeepers those temples of commerce would cease to exist.

Tell him, too, that the merchant-prince, who, once in a year perchance, *en route* to some southern clime, honours Paris with a visit, and spends money so freely, would, without shops and shopkeepers, be no better off than himself; that, like Othello, his occupation would be gone; and that, like his half-tiger, half-monkey neighbour, he might be obliged to descend to the pitiful occupation of grumbling at his sovereign and building barricades.

Nation of shopkeepers! Be it so; long may we continue to be such a nation!

Long may the deep, fertilising river of

commerce flow on; and, enriched by its tributary streams, spread our name and industry to the four quarters of the globe!

And the merchants of England, take them as a class, where will you find more thoroughly practical men?

All rank as gentlemen, who have had a gentleman's education; but there is a vast difference in the species. There is the idle gentleman — the ignorant gentleman — the profligate gentleman — the dishonest gentleman (witness one or two celebrated bankrupts I could name). There is also the practical gentleman; and of such, with very few exceptions, are the merchants of England.

Of course there are exceptions; but that there are in every class. The country gentlemen of England, taken as a body, are a fair specimen of all that is generous and free-hearted; but every now and then a black sheep gets into the flock, and disgraces his lineage and degrades his name.

Then, again, trade opens its arms to all classes, is no respecter of persons, stands not upon idle distinctions of birth and station, but dispenses its favours fairly and honestly to those who seek them.

So lay it to heart, ye men born to toil for

your daily bread, the road to fortune is open to all!

And also, that it must be always a greater glory to win a name than to inherit one.

Eustace, however, belonged to the class who inherit, not win, the blessings they possess. The house of Neville, Constant, and Winslow, was one of the first West India houses in the city, and the heads of the firm lived like kings abroad and princes at home.

Eustace really and truly did not deserve to be called a merchant. At the best, he could only be considered as a sleeping partner in the firm; and simply invested his fortune in the concern, because he derived an excellent income from this source, and because he did not know what better to do with his capital. Besides which, he rather liked the grandeur and state of the position (our merchants are not unlike the feudal princes of old in their towers of strength). Eustace was not insensible to the homage paid him when he appeared in Mincing Lane. Old, grey-headed clerks, young, intelligent, aspiring men, sons of gentlemen like himself, bowed down, and paid him reverence. Men of all degrees doffed

their hats to the rich Mr. Neville. He liked lunching with the Governor of the Bank of England; didn't object to going to the Royal Exchange arm-in-arm with one of the directors; enjoyed the pleasure of marshalling his forces to vote for Baron Rothschild, and thereby testifying his admiration of religious freedom; often graced with his courtly presence the old halls of the ancient guilds; and relished nothing better than a trip to Liverpool, Manchester, or Birmingham, to assist at a royal reception.

Eustace was completely a man of the world; and such a man felt equally at ease at the court of St. James's, the halls of Belgravia, and the rich, cosy, counting-houses of the city.

And his counting-house was a counting-house *par excellence*—its luxuriously stuffed chairs of dark velvet—its hangings of crimson damask—its Turkey carpet—its oak furniture—its panelled walls—its superb dimensions—speaking of days long since, when merchants never dreamt of Hyde Park Gardens and Belgrave Square, but lived cosily and sociably within the sound of Bow Bells.

Mr. Constant, the active head of the firm, was a very keen, hawk-eyed man. He had

originally been head clerk to Eustace's father, and had advanced himself to the position he now held solely through his own industry and perseverance. He was a man of no mean abilities, possessed of immense tact, and flattered Eustace so completely, that Eustace left the management of everything in his hands.

Mr. Winslow, the junior partner, was a young man of about the same age as Eustace himself, who had joined Mr. Constant at the death of the elder Neville.

He was a careless, gay-hearted young man, not over-bright, possessed an excellent private fortune, amassed by his father in trade, and his joining the concern, and throwing in his capital, greatly helped to increase the financial glory of the firm, until, at the period of which I am now writing, it was reckoned one of the safest and best in the City.

Eustace did not know much of the partners; they lived entirely out of his set: once or twice in a-year, perhaps, they exchanged civilities, and Eustace and his wife paid a formal visit to Enfield, where Mr. Winslow's country-house was situated, and to Clapham Park, where Mr. Constant resided; and in the same stately way they returned the visits by

being guests at some grand banquet in Brook Street.

But they never met in the freedom of unrestrained intercourse; both the partners were married men, Mrs. Constant had two daughters to introduce, and Mrs. Winslow a baby to talk about, and these interesting topics formed the staple of their conversation with Millicent.

Eustace was thoroughly easy and free-hearted in money matters; a true child of luxury, he took the good the gods provided for him, and did not trouble his head much as to how it was got.

As to suspecting the honour, probity, or integrity of either of the partners, he would as soon have thought of suspecting the young Clarence.

Great, therefore, was his surprise, when one morning rolling into the City in his close carriage, he found the house only half opened, the clerks standing huddled together in a state of utter bewilderment, and neither of the partners present.

"What's the meaning of all this?" cried he, forcing his way through a crowd of idlers into the house.

Alas! the meaning was soon explained; the house of Neville, Constant, and Winslow had stopped payment that morning, and Messrs. Constant and Winslow, unable to face their creditors, and decidedly unable to account to Neville for the loss of his entire fortune, had each, after a fashion peculiar to this nineteenth century, departed for the Continent.

Eustace stood aghast, and paralysed as it were with horror, as Mr. Bennett, the old confidential clerk, explained with tears in his eyes the dreadful state in which the firm was placed. According to his statement, Constant and Winslow had, to increase their fortune, launched forth into immense speculations—had cast all upon the turn up of a die—had lost—and ruin, inevitable ruin, was the result.

"I wrote to you, sir, last week," pursued the old man, "just to give you a hint to come down and see how matters stood; not that I had an idea it was as bad as yesterday morning it was proved to be. Yesterday, when Mr. Constant called me into his private office, he told me the true state of the case."

"Where is he now?" burst forth Eustace,

while large drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and his eyes seemed almost starting from their sockets. "Where is he?—I must see him. Fool, fool, that I have been!—worse than a fool—a born idiot! But I will have the truth out of him! Where is he?"

"Not here, sir," returned old Mr. Bennett, compassionately. "He told me last night that he should be here early this morning to break the news to you; he also said he should write to you and prepare you a little, so that the shock might not be so heavy."

"I have never received any letter," cried Eustace. "Now I think of it, I do recollect seeing a large office-like letter lying upon the library table, which, no doubt, was yours; but I was very busy, and thinking it a circular, did not open it. Oh, if I had this might have been averted! Heavens! what is to be done? And Constant, why does not he come? What time did he say he would be here?"

"Eleven o'clock," returned the old clerk, hesitatingly.

"And it is now past twelve," said Eustace, looking at his watch. "I must go to him, Bennett: order Ford to get a cab."

"It will be of no use, sir," said Mr. Bennett,

laying his hand gently upon the arm of his agitated master. "I found this letter in Mr. Constant's office when I came this morning. Read!"

Eustace did so. It was short and to the purpose, simply stating that, unable to face the ruin of which he was the innocent cause, he should start for the Continent immediately, and from thence take ship either to America or Australia, and there end his miserable days in perpetual exile.

"Where's Winslow?" said Eustace, crumpling up this precious epistle in his hand. "Fool as he is, I must speak to him!"

"Speak to him?" cried the old clerk. "Why, he formally went away a fortnight ago, to Pau or Nice, for the benefit of his wife's health, he said. Alas!" continued the old man, shaking his head, "I much fear it has been a deep-laid scheme, a preconcerted plan."

"And I the victim!" gasped the unhappy Eustace.

Mr. Bennett did not answer. He felt too much for Eustace to add to his troubles. He knew what a wreck it must turn out, and the dreadful predicament Eustace stood in, and

how utterly ignorant he was of his situation. At present he only thought he had lost his fortune; he had yet to learn that as one, nay, the head of the firm, he was at that moment a bankrupt, and that his house, his carriages, his plate, jewels, and valuables, his wife's clothes, nay, the very things they stood upright in, were all the property of the creditors.

Bankrupt! The proud Eustace Neville—the haughty Eustace Neville—a dishonoured bankrupt!

Well might the old clerk pity him. As for himself, hard as it was at his time of life to seek another situation, it was as nothing to what was in store for his master. He, Mr. Bennett, had saved his earnings most conscientiously; had a nice little house at Kingsland; some few hundreds in the 3 per cent consols; had a dear old wife; affectionate, well-to-do children; and a character which would be a passport to him all over the world.

Did he not pity poor Eustace? Aye, that he did, from the very bottom of his heart; for Eustace's home derelictions had not travelled to the City, and his handsome face, his gay laugh, his light-hearted manner, his kind

consideration for every one beneath him, had won him golden opinions with every man in the establishment, and now, as he sank half fainting into a chair, the old man's heart ached to see him.

"Take a glass of wine, sir; it will do you good,—it will, indeed. You must not give way, sir; you must put a good heart upon it,—you really must."

"A good heart!" murmured the wretched man; "a good heart! I have no heart for anything."

Mr. Bennett did not answer: he went to a secrétaire that stood on one side of the room, opened it, took out a bottle and a glass, and poured out a large glassful of choice old Madeira.

"Drink this, sir," cried he; "it will do you good."

Eustace took it and drank it off. He felt revived, and turning to the clerk, asked if the failure were publicly known.

"Not as yet," answered Mr. Bennett; "but it won't be long before it is. If I might advise, sir, I should say the best thing you can do will be to go quietly home and break the news to Mrs. Neville. And you

know, sir, you must arrange to secure your money, valuables, and such-like, as soon as possible, for of course you are aware they will make you a bankrupt,—in fact, you are one at this moment, and nothing belongs to you by right."

Go home to his wife! Go home to the woman who, in the plenitude of his pride and insolence, he had so deeply injured,—so cruelly crushed! Never!

But there was one to whom he would go,—one who, all sinful and erring as she was, would never forsake him, who would soothe his misery and share his flight. For dark thoughts chased each other across his heated brain: he never could—he never would—face his wife or her family; he never would live to be an object of pity and contempt to the parents of Millicent. He would go to Mrs. Vere, tell her all, then hasten home, take all he was worth, and fly with her that very night to the Continent. He breathed more freely as this plan of escape began to grow feasible. He shook Bennett warmly by the hand, told him he should ever remember his kindness with gratitude, drank off a glass or two more of wine,—just to keep his spirits up

as he said, and then, Bennett having sent for a cab, he went down by the private entrance and got away unobserved.

It was past two when he left the City, and before he arrived at Cambridge Street, Connaught Square, where Mrs. Vere now resided, it was after three. Hastily dismissing the cab, he ran up the steps and inquired if she were at home.

No, she was not; but as he certainly had no need to stand on the courtesies of life with her, he went up-stairs and sat down to await her coming.

What were his reflections?

He had sinned—grievously sinned, not so much in actually committing the sin, as in pursuing such a cold, systematic plan of oppression, towards his unfortunate wife.

His whole life passed in review before him.

Millicent's sweetness, her gentleness, her unvarying patience, her unexpressed endeavours to make it up with him.

He had rejected them all.

"I was not worthy of her, and I have lost her!" cried he, in tones of smothered anguish. "I am only fit to be the companion

of the poor thing I have made as bad as myself. Her I can't injure worse than I have done, and it would be only adding to my faults to leave her behind, to be the but of a heartless world."

Vain sophistry! all pride at the bottom. He clung to her only because he thought she had no right to despise him.

Then his thoughts wandered, and he pictured Millicent's distress, her despair, when she came to know the truth; her father's indignation, her mother's wrath, his uncle's sorrow, and their intense disgust and contempt, when they learnt of his flight and who was the partner of it.

Even then his good angel did not desert him, but inwardly urged him to go back to Millicent, to tell all, to cast himself upon her gentleness and love,—that love, which, he knew, little as he deserved it, nothing could shake.

He would, but for his pride; that demon taunted him with the degradation he would have to undergo.

"No, he would die first!"

And yet he loathed the act he was about to commit, and the woman to whom he must ally himself for life.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, he grew so excited, that he rose from his chair and began pacing up and down the room.

"Curse the woman!" cried he in a fever of angry impatience; "will she never come in? Out on some confounded shopping business or other, while I am wasting my heart's blood in bitter reflections!"

Fortunately, at that moment he heard her knock at the street-door. Turning sick and giddy, he sank down into an easy-chair, when the sound of her voice, as if in conversation, struck upon his ear, and in an agony of fear lest it should be some one he knew, he darted up, and had just time to conceal himself behind the curtain, when she, accompanied by Mr. Barton, entered the room.

She entered in her usual flaunting way, and his heart turned over as he eyed her mincing ways, her stylish bonnet, her set-off dress. Was this the woman to go to the world's end with him? Was this the woman, in whose breast his mighty woes were to seek for consolation, his accusing conscience to find repose? How his heart sickened! but he held his breath, for Mr. Barton spoke.

"Snug little nest this," cried he, gaily; "I do think your Eustace must be an uncommon good fellow."

"You think so?" answered she, in a flirtish manner; then, throwing herself into the chair Eustace had just vacated, she added, "Yes, it is all very nice, and I should be very well content if he had not such a wretched temper."

"Why not give him back as good as he sends, my fair friend?" said Mr. Barton. "I should think you could be a match for most men."

"So I could," returned she, fiercely, "were it not for that wife of his: but I know that if I did not cant, and wheedle, and swear I love him and can't live without him, he would go back and be reconciled to Millicent, and I have vowed, and it shall go hard if I don't keep my vow, that while I live he shall never return to that woman."

"Well, I cannot say, for my own part, that I think her so very attractive," said Mr. Barton, the very name of Millicent making him feel uncomfortable. "I think she is a very strange, oddly-conducted young person."

"Ah! you managed that job very badly.

I can't think how it was, she was so insensible to your merits,—such a favourite as you usually are."

"Well, I own," returned he, complacently sitting down and folding his hands upon his crossed knees, a favourite attitude of his, "I have not much to complain of in that way."

"When do you go to Hampstead?" said Mrs. Vere, cutting short his gratulatory speech rather curtly.

"Next week; and the week after, we go to Miss Child Hoare's; and to-night I am engaged to the concert at Sandowne House."

"Lucky man! does your wife go with you?"

"No!" answered he, in tones of great exultation: "I have managed that."

"I admire your diplomacy," returned she, shrugging her shoulders. "But now, Barton, you must go; for this is about the time Eustace pays his usual visit, and he won't be well pleased at finding such a dangerous man *tête-à-tête* with his precious darling."

Mr. Barton smiled his peculiar smile—that smile which, in his opinion, was his stepping-stone to fortune. He had but to

turn the full glory of it on the fair one he meant to subjugate, and the task was done!

To be sure, Millicent had been insensible to its merits, but then she was one in a thousand.

During this edifying conversation Eustace stood immovable, scarce breathing, lest she should discover his hiding-place; but he shut his teeth hard, as word after word of the heartless little woman's words came home to his heart.

He was punished with a vengeance! So this was the love she bore him! This was the woman his generous, though guilty self, did not like to forsake. This was the woman he meant to have asked to share his flight, his life-long exile!

It was with difficulty he restrained a groan, but he controlled himself, though he clenched his hands till his nails pierced his flesh, and bit his lips till they bled a stream.

At last Mr. Barton rose, put his hat on before the glass, arranged his face into its most killing expression, and kissing the tips of his fingers, murmured "*Au revoir*," and disappeared.

"A great fool!" muttered Mrs. Vere con-

temptuously; "really it is wonderful what fools men are, one in one way, and one in another!" And with this wise axiom she took her gloves and handkerchief off the table, and going into the next room, shut the door behind her.

Eustace watched her departure — heard the closing of the door, dashed his hat upon his head, and rushing out of the room, was down the stairs and out of the house in a moment.

His mind was in a whirl. Reason had deserted her throne, and Despair—dark, bitter Despair, reigned in her stead.

He had nowhere to go to for comfort; he had no one to fly to; he had forfeited his duty as a father, his trust as a husband, and all for what?—the grinning, false, perjured woman he had just left!

His brain felt as if on fire; dark images haunted him, as, unknowing where he went, he drove recklessly through the dirty streets that abut on the Edgeware Road.

He had no resource.

Religion!—he knew it not!

His Saviour!—what had a wretch like him to do with the mercies of his Redeemer?

He had deserted his Maker in the day of

prosperity, and in the hour of adversity he found Him not.

He had but one resource—the grave.

He shuddered—yes! the grave.

Aye! death. Death would be a relief; death would end all his woes.

He forgot it would only be the eternal beginning of them.

The tempter seized his moment. Why not destroy himself?—of what value was his life? None to him, nor to any one else. He would return home, get his pistols, and—

"End all!" cried he aloud, with a bitter laugh—so loud, so bitter, that men turned in the street and looked after him.

By this time it was quite dark; he had not reached Cambridge Street till past three, and he had waited long there: besides, he had been driving about for some hours.

He pulled his hat down over his brows, turned up the collar of his coat so as to avoid recognition, put his hand in his pocket, and a sense of relief pervaded his frame as he felt the latch-key.

He hurried along, and stealthily unlocking the street-door, crept silently up the stairs.

But when was a woman ever deaf to the return of the man she loved?

Millicent had been for hours watching for his return. It was past the usual dinner-hour, and though it was not the rule to wait for him, she had done so in the present instance, and had waited his coming with a beating heart: for she, too, had news for him.

His uncle was gone. Had left a hurried note, in which he said he had just received tidings of a disastrous failure, which, if true, would greatly injure his West Indian property. He was going down to his agent at Liverpool to see what could be done. He said he had not time for particulars, but to put Eustace on his guard.

Millicent did not think that it concerned them, but she feared from the tone of the note that he was in some distress, and she waited anxiously for her husband, to consult with him what had best be done. She was in the drawing-room; the moment she heard his step she darted out.

"Oh, Eustace! I have been waiting for you so long! I am afraid your uncle is in trouble! Read that."

Eustace steadied himself with a strong effort, and did as she required. He guessed the truth in a minute.

"One wreck makes many!" was his inward reflection. "My uncle will fall in the general crash!"

He put the note back into her hand, and said, in as firm a tone as he could command:—

"I will speak to you about this to-morrow; to-night I am not well, and am going to bed."

He turned to go up-stairs. Millicent looked at her husband, and her blood froze. What was it that spoke to her in that haggard face? It was as though years had gone over his head since the morning. Something must be wrong. She summoned courage, laid her hand upon his arm, and said, gently:—

"You are ill! Let me send for a doctor!"

"To-morrow, not to-night. I am only tired," forcing a ghastly laugh.

Then, as if some tender feeling swept across his heart in that hour of desolation, he turned, took her in his arms, pressed her passionately to his heart, and before she could recover her astonishment, was up the stairs and locked in his room.

Millicent stood as in a dream. Ecstasy—pure, unalloyed ecstasy—was her first sensation. Her husband still loved her! She could not doubt it; but then his look of agony—

hopeless, unutterable agony! Fear filled her breast with an undefinable dread. She stood rooted to the spot, when suddenly a glimmering of his purpose flashed into her mind.

"My God!" cried she, in a frenzy of terror; "if it should be so!"

At the same instant she recollected that her room communicated with his, and that the key was on her side.

She darted up the stairs with the speed of lightning.

Into the room, with noiseless steps; down upon her knees, holding her very breath, lest she should be overheard; straining, listening, yearning to find out what he was about.

She heard no sound.

Again she listened; then a wild, heavy, subdued moan, fell upon her quivering ear. She stretched her sense of hearing to the utmost.

What was it she heard, what was it she saw, that made her start, shivering, to her feet?

She paused no longer. Turning the key noiselessly in the lock, she opened the door. Her husband stood with his back to her. She had no time to lose. Another instant, and it would be too late. How she did it, how she

found courage to do it, years after, when she told the tale, she never could say. She saw the open case upon the table; saw him doing something to the pistol; saw him ram it firmly down; darted towards him; dragged, more than took it, out of his hand: seized the other from off the table, and, before he could recover his utter astonishment at the interruption, opened the window, and threw them both out into the street; then falling on her knees, she cried, with frantic vehemence:—

"Thank Heaven you are saved! you are saved!"

Eustace's first feeling, when he recovered his speech, was anger. He turned fiercely on the kneeling Millicent, and said, harshly:—

"Leave the room this moment! By what right do you dare to come here?"

"I will not leave the room!" cried Millicent, firmly. "Oh, Eustace! what have you done that you would destroy yourself?"

"Done!" echoed he, bitterly; "done! ruined myself! ruined you! my child! all—all are ruined!"

"Is that all?" cried Millicent, inexpressibly relieved. "Never mind being ruined! we can do very well without money!"

"Can you, though?" said he, scornfully. "You cannot! you don't know what you are saying! I am ruined! a beggar! a dishonoured bankrupt! a mark for all—all men to stare at! I have not only injured you, but ruined you! The very roof over your head is not your own!"

Millicent was still upon her knees, as hurriedly he spoke these words. She hardly comprehended what he meant. All that she took in was, that he was miserable, wanted comfort, and must be in a bitter strait, or he would not be on the verge of destroying himself. She put her arms round him, and, clinging to him, said, passionately:—

"Listen, Eustace! listen, my husband! listen, and hear me confess how wrong, how wilful I have been; how sorry I am, how grievously I have repented me of my harshness! Though you had injured me, I was not constituted to be your judge. It was not for me to condemn. I own it now, Eustace. I have been cold, hard, and unforgiving. Oh, my husband!" her whole soul melting, as it were, into the words that flowed from her lips, "Oh, Eustace, pardon and forgive me! Say that you still love me! say that you will not

die! say that you will live for my sake! for both our sakes—live to be happy!"

But Eustace could not say it, though he felt it. His wayward spirit could not subdue its pride. He answered moodily; though he never moved, nor rejected the fervent caresses she was lavishing upon him.

"I am not fit to love you. I am not worthy of you, Millicent," he cried. "I will not accept your love upon false pretences. You think me better than I am; but you shall know all. I am just come from Mrs. Vere. If she had proved faithful to me, I should have left England with her to-night."

"Thank God, that she did not!" cried Millicent, fervently.

"But do you not feel the insult? Do you not see how unworthy I am of you?" cried he, roughly. "Why not leave such a wretch, and go home to your father?"

"Never!" cried Millicent; "never! Oh, Eustace!" and she rose from her knees, and clasped him suddenly to her heart; "let us be once more all to each other. Let us forget the past; let us mutually forgive each other. For the sake of our child, Eustace, for the love you once bore me, return to the

heart that has never ceased to cherish you. Oh, my husband!" and again she sank at his feet. "Oh, Eustace! in this moment of sorrow, when all desert you, come back to me; make your home on my breast, bury your woes in my heart, and I will work for you, slave for you, die for you, Eustace!" Her voice failed her. Deep and heavy sobs burst from her lips.

Eustace trembled; his breath came thick; his limbs almost refused to bear him up. He looked down upon his kneeling wife, and contrasted her with the cold-hearted, deceitful being he had just left, and his soul melted within him once more. The love of life took hold upon his heart. With such a wife as Millicent, he could not be utterly miserable. He would live; ay, live to repent and lead a new life—to be a new man. And as these thoughts filled his brain, hope sprang up in his heart, the lines of his face relaxed, his brow unclouded. He lifted up the weeping Millicent, and, folding her to his bosom, said in a low voice:—

"May God have mercy on me, Millicent, for all I have made you suffer! May He pardon my harshness and injustice towards you! Forgive me!"

"Forgive you!" cried she, her face radiant with joy. "I do forgive you; and you forgive me. We have both erred."

Eustace looked into her loving eyes, and read in them the confirmation of her words. His heart opened as it had never done before. His manhood forsook him; large, heavy tears, gathered in his eyes, as he murmured out:—

"Come poverty! come scorn! come slights! I can bear ye all. I have you, my Millicent; and I am happy."

"We will be happy!" cried she. "We will be all to each other, and that will produce happiness."

A deep silence fell over them. Neither spoke. Millicent was lifting up her heart in inward prayer to God, for having mercifully heard her sorrowing petitions; and Eustace, for the first time in his life, felt a new-born feeling of thankfulness to his Maker pervade his frame.

Millicent was the first to speak. Like a good wife, she recollected her husband had not had any dinner; most probably not eaten anything since breakfast. She lifted up her head, and said smilingly:—

"Now, dearest, you must come down to

dinner. You will be quite ill, if you do not; and afterwards you shall tell me all that has happened."

Eustace complied; and that dinner, eaten with the certain knowledge that he was a ruined man, was the happiest meal he had ever made in his life.

CHAPTER VII.

A DISAGREEABLE SURPRISE.

GREAT was the dismay in Guildford Street when, on the morning following the events related in the last chapter, Mr. Morley read in the "Times" a short paragraph, announcing with regret the failure of the great West Indian firm of Neville, Constant, and Winslow.

His consternation was only exceeded by his fears for Millicent. As to Mrs. Morley, this put the finishing stroke to her indignation against Eustace.

"Not content with treating her darling like a brute as he was, but to go and plunge her into beggary by his wilful extravagance! No doubt," cried she, "he has been squandering away his money on that good-for-nothing trollopy little woman. However, if he expects to find a home here he is much mistaken.

Milly may come, and welcome; but I am not going to have him lolling about the house, doing nothing but play the fine gentleman."

Mrs. Morley spoke as she felt, which was very sore. She was just expecting offers for her two eldest daughters from two unexceptionable men, one a merchant, the other a barrister in Lincoln's Inn—an introduction of Norman's; and she had flattered herself that Millicent's having made such an excellent match had greatly helped on her sisters. It was something to be brother-in-law to the rich Mr. Neville, and doubtless both Mr. Walters and Mr. Hayman felt the advantages of such a connexion.

Now all was knocked on the head, and as the binding ("Will you have me?") was not yet spoken, who knew but what this might prove a damper to the affair?

She might have spared herself her disagreeable reflections, for Mr. Hayman and Mr. Walters were both men of honour, and most sincerely attached to Geraldine and Blanche.

But she did not know this, and the doubt made her doubly bitter against the unfortunate Eustace.

"Now don't be asking him here, Mr. Morley," cried she, as, after a hurried breakfast, her husband prepared to start for Brook Street. "Don't be inviting him to come here; I can't bear the thoughts of him, much less be civil to him."

"Catherine," said Mr. Morley, sternly, "you talk without book. You forget that Neville was not an acting partner; he, most probably, will have to suffer for their faults. And even if it were not so, you could bear the thought of him well enough, and the sight of him too, when he was rich, even though you knew he was not a good husband to our darling child. God forbid, now that he is poor and in trouble, that we should turn our backs upon him!"

Mrs. Morley shrank into herself, as she always did when rebuked by her husband, and contented her heart by grumbling unrestrainedly when alone with the girls.

But though too dutiful to contradict their mother, neither Geraldine nor Blanche could be brought to utter a word against poor Eustace. Now that he was in trouble, with the usual generosity of youth, they forgot all the little slights they had felt so grievously an-

noying at the time, and only remembered his lavish prodigality.

"Oh, mamma," cried they both, when their mother had made them understand the meaning of the word bankrupt, which she did with peculiar illustrations of her own—illustrations which might puzzle Mr. Commissioner Fonblanque, or even the clever Mr. Linklater;—"Oh, may we not go to Millicent directly? What will she do if the men come and take her furniture? Why, she won't have a bed to lie upon! And her clothes too, mamma! Is it possible they can take her clothes?"

"Every rag that belongs to her, save what she stands upright in," said Mrs. Morley, solemnly; "however," seeing the terrified looks of the two girls, "that won't happen to-day, nor to-morrow; there's plenty of time to see what must be done. We must wait and hear what your papa says. I would go myself, only I know I should say something I might be sorry for to that purse-proud Mr. Eustace. His fine airs have brought his pigs to a pretty market!"

"But, mamma," remonstrated Geraldine, in a courageous tone, "you would not be so

unkind, now that Mr. Neville is poor, as to turn your back upon him? Though he has a haughty temper, he has always been kind and liberal in anything we have asked him to do. You remember how he got us the box at the Opera the night the Queen went in state."

"Ah, well!" returned Mrs. Morley, seeing she was likely to get the worst of the argument; "we won't talk any more about it. I can do nothing till your papa comes back. As to Milly and her boy, they are ever welcome to have a home here." And so saying, she went off about her household concerns, and to relieve her mind by telling old Hannah.

The girls, thus left to themselves, talked the subject threadbare: but it was of no use. They dared not, after what their mother had said, go to Brook Street, and yet they did so long to see poor Milly and comfort her.

They knew nothing of business, and their minds were haunted with vague fears lest Milly and their darling Clarence might be carried off to a gaol, and be kept there on bread and water.

They felt sure poor Eustace would be imprisoned, and pitied him with all their hearts. They had heard their father tell dismal stories

of bankrupts dying brokenhearted in prison; and the idea of Eustace—the gay, the elegant Eustace, who, in spite of all his shortcomings, they were secretly very proud of; the idea of his dying in gaol melted their hearts: but they could do nothing save await the return of their father with breathless impatience.

Meanwhile he had had a stormy time of it. Arrived in Brook Street, he was shown into the drawing-room, where, in a minute, Millicent joined him.

"My poor child!" taking her in his arms, and pressing her fervently to his kind, fatherly heart: "My poor, dear child! thank God I have a home to offer you. You and your boy must return with me to Guildford Street."

Millicent returned her father's embrace, and then said quietly:—

"Thank you, dearest papa: but there is no need for me to do that. We shall not be obliged to leave this house directly; and when we do, we shall take a lodging till Eustace can decide what is best to be done."

Mr. Morley looked his daughter steadily in the face, and said:—

"Millicent, I am a man of few words,

but nevertheless I am not so blind as you imagine. I have not been ignorant of the way in which you have been treated by Mr. Neville (I won't call him your husband, for he has been no husband to you). While you were rich and complained not I did not interfere, and prevented your mother from interfering" (and he might have added, a hard job he'd had of it); "but the case is different now. Neville is most probably a ruined man. The 'Times' says the partners have absconded. You surely do not mean to share in the hardships of a man who has treated you with such unmerited scorn?"

"And you surely do not suppose, papa," cried Millicent, all her wifely blood flushing up into her face; "you do not suppose, do you, that I, who, by your own account, was willing to share my husband's good fortune, would desert him now in his hour of need? No! I would die first!"

"Millicent," said her father, sternly, "you misinterpret my words. When I said good fortune, I meant, that so long as your husband could keep his wife, and that wife was satisfied, what could I do? Nothing. But the case is different now. You will want a home,—want

one at this moment. I met Lindsay as I was coming here, and he tells me it is a wreck; that there won't be a shilling in the pound; and that Mr. Neville has not only lost his own fortune, but is liable for all the debts of the firm. The very roof, therefore, under which we are standing is not your own."

"I know that," cried Millicent, hastily; "more reason for me to be at hand to comfort my husband in this his hour of misfortune."

"Right, my child!" answered Mr. Morley; "and Heaven forbid I should counsel a woman to leave her husband at any time, much less in his day of affliction. But, Millicent, you must be aware that neither your mother nor myself can feel anything but anger against Mr. Neville. What has he done? Did he not take you out of the bosom of an affectionate family, where you were loved and idolised, and after a few months, when he got tired of you, leave you to pine and die? I have only to look in your face," pursued her father, "to see how you have been treated."

He was right. Millicent did look only the shadow of her former self: but the brave young wife remained firm and undaunted.

"My father," said she, gently, taking his

hand in hers, "listen to me. You have ever been a kind and indulgent parent, and so has my dearest mother; but, my father, my husband is dearer to me than all else. I will not deny that a misunderstanding has existed between us, but that was quite as much my fault as it was his: had I been less harsh, less severe, less unforgiving, all would have been well long, long ago. Oh!" (and tears streamed down her pale cheeks,) "Oh, do you think I could leave him when last night I was only just in time to save him from self-destruction?"

"From what, Milly?" cried Mr. Morley, in a horrified tone.

"From despair, from death!" cried Millicent, in a heartbroken voice. "Oh, papa! listen while I tell you all;" and with heavy sobs she related all that had passed the night before. "Now, papa," cried she, kissing him fondly, "you know and feel that I must love him more than ever, and that I would prefer begging with him to a throne without him. For that reason I come to speak to you first, for he is very much cast down, and yet very proud,—just what you might expect, papa. We shall not trouble, nor be a burden to you; he would not, and I must do whatever he

wishes: but, papa, if ever you loved your Millicent, be kind to my husband."

Mr. Morley was deeply moved. He had at first greatly liked Eustace, and it was only when he fancied he was ill-treating his darling Millicent that he turned against him; but he was a quiet man, and, as he justly observed, had kept his dislike to himself, and restrained his wife from expressing hers.

But his daughter's simple, straightforward recital, greatly served to alter his opinion. Millicent told him all, and as a man of the world he could enter into the difficulties of Eustace's position, hampered with such a woman as Mrs. Vere; and though he could not but condemn his conduct, he could find palliating circumstances sufficient to induce him to forgive him. He pondered a few minutes, and then said, feelingly:—

"They say, 'Blessed are the peacemakers!' If ever there was one on earth, Milly, it is you. I came here to take you and your child home, and had you consented, it is most probable I should never have set eyes upon your husband again. However, let bygones be bygones. I am not the man to desert a friend, much less the husband of my child, in

the day of trial. Josiah Morley was never known to forsake a friend in adversity yet. So now, Milly, where is the poor fellow? Bring him here and let us shake hands, and then we can talk over this affair."

Millicent embraced her father fondly. "My dearest, my best papa!" then, lowering her voice to a whisper, she added:—

"And you will tell mamma all this, and beg of her not to be unkind to poor Eustace. I know she would not, only she thinks he has acted badly by me; but, poor fellow, he is so altered only since yesterday, it would break my heart if any one said a harsh word to him."

"Ay, ay, I'll take care, my dear," returned her father: "your mother will do just what I tell her! Like mother, like daughter," cried he, in a bantering tone, to cover his emotion. Yet as she glided from the room to fetch her husband his eyes filled, and he muttered:—

"My poor, poor child! what will become of you?"

Millicent had a hard task to persuade Eustace to meet him. The length of the conference had convinced him that she had had

some difficulty in overcoming her father's scruples; and knowing how much he deserved that father's anger, he could not humble his proud spirit to meet him. The old leaven of pride still lurked about him.

"Go!" he said, pushing Millicent away. "Go with your father; I know he has come to fetch you."

"He has," said Millicent, in a firm, clear voice; for she was above falsehood or deceit of any kind. "He came to fetch me; but I would not go, and told him the reason why. I told him all; my pride, my coldness, all my waywardness. How, all the time I was behaving, as I thought, so well, so grandly, I was forfeiting my first duty—that of obedience. I see it all now," added she, in a soft, low tone; "but I feel that there are happy days yet in store for us; days when we shall both, in the presence, perhaps, of real trouble, wonder how, with all the blessings of life around us, we could not bear and forbear."

She paused: Eustace rose:—

"Millicent," said he, in a hollow tone, "if ever you doubted my love, doubt it no longer. Nothing but love for you would tempt me to act as I am now going to do."

He drew her arm within his as he spoke, and hastily went up-stairs.

"Mr. Morley," said he, going up to the embarrassed old gentleman, "I am come to ask your pardon for Millicent's sake, not for my own. I am not worthy of it. If she would have left me, and gone back with you, I should never have intruded myself upon your notice. But she will not; for her sake, then, forgive me the wrong I have done your daughter."

There was a frank, unaffected dignity about him, as he spoke these humiliating words, which went straight to the heart of Mr. Morley. He wrung Eustace by the hand, and muttered, half audibly:—

"There! there! don't say any more! Be a good husband to Milly, and let what's past be forgotten."

"Amen!" said Eustace, fervently. "You shall take me on trust. Be my first master, I dare say I shall soon have to seek a second."

"Ah, well, time enough for that. Now for business. How has this confounded affair come to pass?"

"I know no more than you do," returned Eustace. "It is evident Constant and Winslow have acted like a couple of scoundrels,

and have started off, leaving me to bear the brunt."

"You know that your name is in the Gazette to-day?" observed Mr. Morley.

"Yes! and by this time, doubtless, Mr. Ward is considering that he must look out for a new situation."

Eustace spoke this bitterly; feeling, as people do at such moments, that nothing is so annoying as the alacrity with which servants immediately look out for fresh places.

Yet, after all, they are not to be blamed. Servitude is no inheritance.

"I think we had better go off to the City at once," said Mr. Morley; "and we must call the principal creditors together, and put the case entirely into their hands. It is no fault of yours; you are the worst sufferer after all: but we must see how far your personal property is liable to the debts of the firm. And we had better call on Norman Austin as we go along, for we shall want a good lawyer."

Eustace winced. Of all men he would rather not have been indebted to Norman Austin. But he felt his father-in-law's kindness too much; felt too much the value of having such an unimpeachable man as Mr.

Morley to stand by him, to wish to raise any objections.

Though Mr. Morley did not go for much at the West end, Mr. Morley was a tower of strength on the eastern side of Temple Bar.

Millicent saw by the expression of her husband's face how much he disliked applying to her cousin Norman—a feeling in which she herself shared, though from very different motives; so she said, gently:—

"Norman, being a barrister, won't be able to do much. You want a lawyer, don't you?"

"Why, what makes you so wise, my little girl? What do you know about lawyers?" said her father.

Millicent laughed. She could laugh now, which shows how little riches have do with happiness.

"Well, at any rate, we will call," said Mr. Morley; "and if Norman can't be of any other use, he can put us in the right way how to proceed."

This being agreed upon, Eustace rang the bell, and ordered the carriage round directly; and no one, judging from the unmoved expression of Mr. Ward's well-trained face, could

have guessed that he perfectly well knew that Eustace's right and interest in the carriage was gone for ever.

But he did though—had known of the misfortune almost as soon as his master. In fact, the whole household knew what had happened, for the coachman learnt it from the city porter, when he went at the usual hour to fetch his master.

It is ill news that does not do somebody good. It brought things to a climax between Ward and Miss Thompson. He had taken the opportunity, while Millicent was soothing her unhappy husband, of asking the lady's-maid to accept his hand (his heart, as he informed her, had long been hers), and preside over a neat public-house, which he had some thoughts of taking in the neighbourhood.

Miss Thompson was not in a cruel humour, so the wooing came off prosperously, and both agreed to say nothing about what was going on, but wait till Eustace spoke to them. "For master has always behaved like a gentleman," observed Mr. Ward, "and I am sure he will do no less now."

To this Miss Thompson assented, and it was finally decided upon, that if she could

find a convenient opportunity she was to give Millicent a hint of the change in her prospects.

"I wonder what will become of her, poor thing!" observed Thompson: "go back to her father and mother, I suppose?"

"I doubt it," said Mr. Ward. "From what I could gather up-stairs, I think master and she have made it up; and if so, she's not the woman to forsake him."

Thompson sighed. It was a delicate subject for her to give an opinion on; luckily, supper coming in, relieved her from her embarrassment, and she and Mr. Ward spent the evening in a state of blissful contentment.

As Millicent did not give Miss Thompson an opportunity, she took one, and hearing her mistress go up to her room after the gentlemen had departed, she followed her, and unfolded her happy prospects.

"I am sincerely glad to hear of your being likely to settle so well," was Millicent's quiet answer. "The more as, from a misfortune that has deprived Mr. Neville of nearly all his fortune, I shall not require your services much longer."

There was a quiet dignity in Millicent's

manner which precluded any further conversation, and Miss Thompson withdrew, thinking that, of all the ladies she had ever served, she was the closest, and least communicative.

But Millicent was too happy to notice her maid's injured looks. Millicent was thinking of her splendid drawing-rooms, her costly boudoir, her luxurious apartments, and marvelling why the certainty of losing them did not cost her even a sigh; nay, that she felt almost a feeling of relief in not remaining in the rooms in which she had passed so many miserable hours.

She knew nothing of poverty, but the name.

Time will show how she bore its actual approach; for poverty—vulgar, disagreeable poverty—was all she had to look forward to.

I often hear people, who have never known any condition but that of wealth, declare they should not mind being poor; but, then, their notions of poverty are mostly gathered from what they see represented at a theatre or opera.

Their notions are of such poverty as resides in pretty little cottages covered with woodbines and roses, with gardens all round

them, and blessed with perpetual summer. Not cold, bitter, unromantic poverty.

Not the poverty that turns into a second floor in Dean Street, or a third floor in Poland Street.

Not the poverty that haunts all the streets in the neighbourhood of Soho.

Not the poverty that takes in shirts to make at half-a-crown a-dozen, needles and thread included.

Not the poverty that, when pinching and ravening with hunger, tempts some wretched mother to pawn the worthless work to procure bread for her starving children.

Not the poverty that lurks in the narrow corners, the unclad attic, the miserable cellars, of this great and luxurious city.

Not the poverty which is known only to those "who visit the fatherless and poor in their affliction, and keep themselves unspotted from the world."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WIND-UP.

THE great house of Neville, Constant, and Winslow, did not fall without causing an immense sensation. Though every day produced some fresh calamity in the City, and though house after house went down like ninepins, still none equalled in vastness the house of Neville; it towered like a very Babel in its fall.

But in this money-getting, driving, inventing, patenting, discovering, never-stand-still period in which we live, nothing remains an object of conversation beyond a week or so. Events crowd so quickly, that they jostle each other in their claims to public notice. Even the "Times," that mighty dictator, can only give to each event its allotted space in its impartial columns. Then it cries, "Make

room, gentlemen! you have had your say out; your wants have been attended to; your case has been duly put forth. You now stop the way, and the dethronement of a monarch or the dissolution of a government are waiting to take your place."

Eustace had to undergo a severe ordeal; as the two acting partners were gone, and his knowledge of the business was next to nothing, his difficulties increased tenfold.

Norman Austin proved an invaluable help. He not only put Eustace in the best path, but gave him the aid of his own powerful talents.

Yet, with all, it was a fearful trial to a proud, reserved, sensitive spirit like Eustace's, and, but for Millicent, he would never have had courage to breast the storm.

But the real beauty of her character now shone forth in its clearest light. She was ever at hand to soothe and comfort him; and her sweetness, her unvarying gentleness, acted like a soporific on the irritated nerves of the harassed man.

Not that the creditors behaved harshly,—quite the contrary. He gave up every shilling he was worth; and they could not forbear

admiring his sense of honour and his stern spirit of rectitude.

But it was the forms he had to go through that cut his proud spirit to the quick. He had to go to Basinghall Street, stand in the open court of that fearful weird-like building, whose walls have echoed with such startling stories of reckless extravagance, bitter misery, and dishonest fraud. Still, among all his misfortunes, he enjoyed one great triumph;—when he stood at the bar of the court, not a personal creditor appeared against him.

He had ever been so exact, so liberal in his payments, that his creditors, to whom he owed a few trifling debts, with that manly spirit which so pre-eminently distinguishes the upright British tradesman, refused to appear against him, or have their accounts included in the schedule. They had waited on him in a body and told him so.

Eustace was deeply affected, and so was Millicent; but her heart swelled with proud delight at this unasked-for tribute of respect to her husband in his day of misfortune. At that moment she forgot all her husband's past transgressions in her wife-like pride at this unexpected homage paid to his integrity.

But the most sorrowful day has its termination. He passed through the Court, and came out with an untarnished name and an empty pocket.

The house in Brook Street was sold. His plate, his furniture, his pictures, his valuables, Millicent's jewels—everything went to the hammer.

The proceeds were like a drop of water in the sea. They did not allow even of a nominal dividend. They barely paid the working out of the fiat and the lawyers' expenses.

During this time Eustace had been in the receipt of a weekly allowance, and had removed from Brook Street into a small second-floor in Orchard Street.

Of course, as is the case under such circumstances, butterfly acquaintances flew off to sun themselves in happier and newer scenes. Their friends remained firm, and proved a great solace. The old Signor was one. Could he have had his own way, he would fain have taken Eustace, Millicent, and the child into his house, till they had decided what their plans should be; but Eustace, with much gratitude, declined his offer.

From the first night of their reconciliation,

Millicent and he made up their minds to refuse all offers of a home from any of their friends or acquaintances.

Mrs. Morley, who, whatever she felt in her heart, was outwardly civil to Eustace, was the first to come and proffer a home in Guildford Street till they could see what was to be done; and she was extremely irate when Millicent, with many thanks, declined the offer.

"Well, Milly, I never heard the like of it! Such nonsense, too! you know you must leave this house next week!"

"Yes," said Millicent, cheerfully; "and believe me, mamma, Eustace and I are most grateful to you for your kindness: but, you see, we must steadily set our minds to consider what will be best for us to do, and we shall do it better by ourselves in a lodging."

"Well, Millicent, you know best; but I must say I never expected that a child of mine would be put to such shifts; and I think it most ridiculous your going into a dirty, poking lodging, when you might come to Guildford Street."

"We could not live in Guildford Street," returned Millicent, gently; "and as we must do something for a living, the sooner we begin

the better. I assure you I have no fears for the future."

"What nonsense you talk, Milly!" cried Mrs. Morley, angrily. "One would think you were a born natural, to speak as you do! Hasn't every shilling gone in that frightful bankruptcy? Even the money your husband settled upon you is lost!"

"I know that, mamma," returned Millicent, with spirit; "but you must recollect, mamma, that it is an unavoidable misfortune. No fault of Eustace's. He could not, by any possibility, foresee what has come to pass. His worst enemy would acquit him on that point."

Millicent spoke with dignity. She was hurt that her mother should be always trying to say something ill-natured about her husband. Mrs. Morley's naturally affectionate heart smote her, and she resumed the conversation in a more affectionate tone:—

"But, Milly, what do you and Eustace think of doing? If you won't take help from your father or me, what's to become of you?"

"I did not say we wouldn't take help," said Millicent, gaily; "you can do me a very great service, if you like."

"What's that?" said Mrs. Morley.

"I'll tell you, Yesterday, we received a letter from the principal creditor (assignee, I think Eustace called him), begging me, in the name of the rest of the creditors, to retain my clothes, and any little trifles I might select, or had a value for. I was very much pleased at this mark of kindness, and so was Eustace; and he immediately wrote and thanked him, stating, that I should be glad to save a few of the presents that were made me on my marriage."

"That was behaving very handsomely, I must say!" returned her mother. "Now, Milly, you must look round, and make out a nice list."

"Oh, no, mamma! I shall only take one or two things which I have an attachment for. It would be using very unfair advantage of their generosity to carry off the best!"

"Ah, well! it is no use giving advice; you will follow your own, any one can see. But what is it you want me to do?"

"Buy my unnecessary clothes, mamma. That is, my expensive laces, shawls, velvets, and court-dresses. You know Cherry and Blanche are going to be married, and you can have them

for anything you like to give me, and it will be a real service to me!"

"La! child, how you talk! just as if I would take advantage of your misfortunes and buy the clothes off your back! No, indeed, I shall do no such thing; I shall just speak to your papa, and he will give you whatever money you want."

"No, he won't! because I shall not take it," returned Millicent, decisively. "Eustace and I have made up our minds to accept of no pecuniary aid unless, as a matter of absosolute necessity, we are quite obliged. We are young, and we mean to work. As to the clothes, if you won't buy them, why I must dispose of them in some other way."

"Oh! I will buy them," returned Mrs. Morley, her prudent mind quite distressed at the way in which Millicent would be taken in if mixed up in any bartering transactions. "Don't go and fret your poor heart about them; I will buy them all, if that'll please you!"

"Thank you, dear mamma; that takes a heavy weight off my mind. And I am so glad, too, to think that all Eustace's beautiful gifts will not fall into the hands of strangers."

This knotty point being settled, Mrs. Morley soon after took her leave, and at night she related the conversation to her husband, and received from him an unlimited order to buy everything Millicent was inclined to dispose of.

"It is the only way in which we can help her at present," observed he. "Eustace has a very independent spirit at the bottom: he has been spoilt by flattery and self-indulgence, and being a good-looking fellow, the women have got hold of him. But I am very much mistaken if misfortune does not produce a salutary effect upon his character."

"I am glad to hear you say so, dear," observed his helpmate; "but I do wish he could have saved a little just to live upon. So proud as he is, what is to become of them?"

"Work!" returned her husband, tartly. "And so much the better. Hitherto idleness has been Eustace's bane; once let him taste the sweets of industry, and he will be happy. He is young enough to win a fortune yet."

Of his winning a fortune Mrs. Morley had her doubts, but she respected her husband's judgment too much to say so, and there the conversation ended.

But she carried out her husband's instructions to the letter, and Millicent, by that means, became possessed of a sum large enough to enable her to dismiss her servants with the regular warning; and as Ward and Thompson had both of late assumed a most patronising air, she was not sorry at having it in her power to pay them their lawful due, and rid herself of a nuisance.

She paid the servants the morning they were to leave Brook Street, having purposely sent Eustace out of the way, that he should not be subjected to the annoyance of hearing any remarks that might be made.

Ward and Thompson received their wages first, in dignified silence. They were both a little huffed at the want of confidence, as they styled it, which Mr. and Mrs. Neville had displayed towards them, in not speaking more openly of their misfortunes.

These great guns dismissed, the cook, coachman, footmen, housemaids, and inferior aids received theirs; and lastly came the nurse, and the young girl who waited under her.

Mrs. Watson was very sorry to leave her mistress, and told her so; and Millicent, who had met much respectful kindness from this

woman, spoke more freely to her than to any of the others.

"My good Watson," said she, "I am quite as sorry to part with you as you are to leave your situation. You have been a most faithful servant to me, and very kind to Clarence. I am sure any one who employs you will have a treasure."

"You are very good to say so, ma'am," returned the nurse, wiping her eyes. "But if I might make bold to speak, ma'am, I would say, that I shall be very thankful to stay till you are quite settled without any remuneration whatever; I am so sorry to leave my dear Master Clarence."

"I am very grateful to you for your kindness," cried Millicent, her young heart touched by this proof of respect to herself and love for her child. "But, Watson, I cannot accept your kind offer — Mr. Neville would not permit it."

"But how will you ever wash and dress Master Clarence, ma'am? He is a most excellent young gentleman, but he do splash about in the water so."

Millicent smiled at this account of her son's aquatic propensities, but she only said:—

"I shall manage, never fear; so good by, Watson. I hope you will soon get a good place. I shall have great pleasure in giving you a character."

Millicent said this with an air that showed their conference was at an end. Mrs. Watson took the hint, and curtseying respectfully, went to take leave of her darling Master Clarence.

"Now, Sarah, I have only you to settle with: let me look at your account."

But the girl neither moved nor spoke.

"Have you not made out your account?" cried Millicent, looking up, for she was in a hurry to settle her disagreeable task. "Tell me what I owe you, and I will make it out for you."

"Oh, ma'am!"—coming forward—"Please don't be angry, ma'am, but if you would but keep me .... I shall break my heart at parting from Master Clarence, and, ma'am—my lady—I can't, indeed I can't leave you all alone!" And the girl threw her apron over her face and burst into tears.

Millicent felt her own eyes moisten; for in moments of trial and suffering sympathy levels all distinctions—makes all men bro-

thers. She spoke, but it was in a quivering tone:—

"I wish I could retain you, Sarah, but I am going into furnished lodgings, and do not require a servant."

She could not bring herself to say that she dared not afford one. But Sarah, in her straightforward simplicity, spared her any trouble on that point.

"Oh, ma'am, I know all about that, and hope you don't fancy I feel any less respect. I am sure, ma'am, I shall always love you for your goodness to me when poor mother died."

Millicent had forgotten the circumstance, but she now recollected that she had sent her into the country to attend her mother's death-bed, and provided her mourning at her own expense. She knew also that she was devoted to Clarence, and this alone would have decided her could she have afforded it; but she could not, so only said:—

"Any good I may have done you, Sarah, I am sure you have deserved—you have always been most kind and attentive to Master Clarence."

"Yes, ma'am, I love him!—I do; and

nurse is right, ma'am, you will never be able to dress him, such a delicate young lady as you be: he is so strong, and do kick so; and I don't want any wages—indeed I don't —if you will only keep me."

Millicent hesitated; certainly she had not reckoned on the kicking propensities of her son and heir, and she certainly would like to keep Sarah on account of her being so faithful. She paused; the girl saw the relaxation of her features, and added:—

"If you send me away, ma'am, I shall have no home to go to."

"No home to go to!" repeated Millicent, in surprise. "Why, your father is a most respectable farmer!"

"Yes, ma'am!" said the girl, in broken accents; "but he is married again, and has married a woman that is not fit for his daughters to go to."

"Poor girl!" said Millicent; "that is very shocking. If I thought it would be any help to you——" she stopped.

"Oh, yes, ma'am! it will be the greatest help!" cried the girl, eagerly, answering Millicent's looks instead of her words; "and I will serve you so faithfully, and be so

saving, and take such care of Master Clarence."

Millicent could not find it in her heart to dismiss such a good creature; besides which, she was not insensible to the comfort it would be having a person about her who knew her way, seeing that, like Noah's dove, she was going out into the wide, wide world. So Sarah Willis continued in her service, and Millicent found the comfort of her when at night she put Clarence to bed, and brought up the tea, in their narrow lodging in Orchard Street.

CHAPTER IX.

ALTERATION OF CIRCUMSTANCES.

WHAT a change to three rooms!—such smoky, poky, dingy-looking rooms too, with their old-fashioned furniture, and Irish maid-of-all-work! Millicent felt, that if she could bear this, she could bear anything.

She did not mind the small size half so much as she did the dirt, and it was with a thankful heart that she told herself every day, it was only for a time, while the affairs of the firm were being wound up.

And these were soon settled. Eustace gave up everything so unreservedly, entered so fully, and explained everything he knew (and God knows that was little enough) about the business so honestly, that it soon came to a close, and he received in return for his immense fortune, for the loss of all his wealth, a first-class certificate.

As to his fraudulent partners, they had arranged matters so well, and concocted their schemes with such consummate art, that up to the present moment they had defied all discovery, and although one of the detective force was employed to trace them no clue had as yet been obtained.

Except to satisfy the ends of justice, which has wisely forbidden that men shall ever play the rogue, and carry their ill-gotten spoils off to another land, and there revel in luxury, the bringing back of the two recreants would not have given any particular satisfaction either to Eustace or the creditors, for every trace or shadow of property was done away with.

The house at Enfield, the villa at Clapham, had all disappeared. They had been sold and in the possession of their new owners three months before the break-up.

Mr. Winslow's wife and child had been on the Continent for some time, for the benefit of Mrs. Winslow's health, and, as before stated, he had joined them about a fortnight previous to the bankruptcy.

He had been traced to Paris, thence to Marseilles. There all clue was lost: in what

vessel he and his family had taken flight, the detective officer failed to discover.

It was the general opinion that Constant, his wife, and daughters, had met Winslow at Marseilles, and that, whether by land or sea, they had departed in company.

Eustace was very indifferent on the subject. He was not man of business enough to feel a hearty delight at two such villains being caught and punished for their iniquitous proceedings. The only sensation he experienced was one of intense disgust, and, as far as he was concerned, he hoped never again to hear their names mentioned. For what he cared, they might be in Spain, enjoying a luxurious exile—a fashion since followed by some others of our countrymen.

The one point throughout the whole proceedings which affected him most, was the trouble it entailed upon his kind and unoffending uncle. Not that the elder Mr. Neville had any dealings with his late brother's firm, but the house at Liverpool in which his property was greatly bound up, had, and the failure almost served to upset them.

They had hoped to weather the storm, but hardly knew, and Mr. Neville found on his

arrival at Liverpool that it would be necessary for his interests to return immediately to the West Indies.

With a sorrowing heart, therefore, he was forced to abandon the pursuit after his unhappy son, so, returning to London, he took a hurried leave of Eustace and Millicent, and having obtained from the old Signor a promise that he would do his best to continue the search, went down to Southampton, and embarked immediately for Barbadoes.

Eustace felt his uncle's departure as a relief; his mind was so sensitively alive on the score of money matters, that he could not brook being even an innocent cause of another man's ruin.

As to accepting aid from his uncle, he would have suffered death ere he would have bent his proud spirit to have done so.

It seemed as though, knowing his frailty on some points, he settled matters with his conscience, by extra-strictness on others, and by squaring accounts thus, trusted that the harm he did with one hand was negatived by the good he did with the other. Vain fallacy! but, nevertheless, one in which many men indulge.

But of all Eustace's troubles, and he fully

realised the old adage that they never come alone, but, like migratory birds, in flocks, his *liaison* with Mrs. Vere was the one most easily disposed of.

Great had been her dismay when she heard of the bankruptcy, and on first reading the astounding intelligence she had written to implore of Eustace to come to her: she expressed herself as knowing no peace till she saw him; that she was miserable, struck to the heart with fear and terror.

So she was, but she did not add that it was on account of her owing six months' rent, from having applied the money Eustace was in the habit of allowing for this to other purposes, besides being deeply in debt for clothes, jewels, and other articles.

What to do, if Eustace should be unable to liquidate these little trifles, struck dismay into her soul.

She was aware that, living apart from her husband, he not being even in the country, she was liable for any debts she might contract; and she quivered and quaked with terror as the thought of Cursitor Street presented itself to her view; so she sat down and waited for Eustace with an impatience

she had not felt since the first days of their acquaintance.

But she sat in vain: morning deepened into noon, noon into night, and still no Eustace made his appearance.

Her state of mind became pitiable. What was to be done? She wore her mind out wondering what could detain him, and guessed everything but the truth: namely, his own free will.

Could he be ill? Not unlikely! How abominably provoking, just when she wanted him! But no, Eustace was not the man to sit down and fret himself sick.

"Had he destroyed himself?" As this thought crossed her mind, even her vain, puerile nature, shrank in horror.

Her suspense grew so dreadful that she could bear it no longer. She put on her bonnet and shawl and walked straight off to Brook Street.

The door was opened by the imperturbable Ward. She asked if Mr. Neville were at home.

The answer was in the affirmative.

"Tell him," cried she, now really agitated, "that I wish to speak to him for one minute."

Ward departed, having first shown her

into the dining-room. In a few minutes he returned, saying, "Mr. Neville could not see her, but she would hear from him in the course of the evening."

She had no alternative but to depart, which she did, inwardly muttering that she would make Mr. Eustace pay for his impudence in denying her an interview.

It was late at night—she was just going to bed in despair—when her maid put a large packet into her hands. She recognised Eustace's handwriting, and tore it open in frantic haste.

Numberless trifles dropped from it—all the baubles she had ever, bestowed upon Eustace Neville; also her letter unopened. A note accompanied them, in which was written:—

"I return you your letter, feeling that you will be sure it is quite unnecessary for me to read it, when I tell you that I was an unwilling listener to the conversation that passed between you and the Reverend Mr. Barton yesterday. I shall make no comments. You know me too well not to be quite certain that henceforth we must be as strangers. Were I rich as formerly, instead of being a penniless

bankrupt, I would continue you your allowance, but I have not the means. You shared in my prosperity, you are not worthy to share in my adversity."

The letter dropped from her hand. Eustace overhear her conversation! Impossible! How could he? If he had been in the room she must have seen him.

Perhaps he was in her bedroom. But if he were he could not have overheard, as the rooms did not communicate.

Suddenly the truth flashed into her mind. He was behind the curtain! He had played her such a trick once before; but then it had ended in additional caresses and a handsome present.

She cursed her own folly in no very measured terms, but was too desperate to waste time upon what could not be helped.

She would make one more effort with Eustace.

She wrote again, in a tone, partly loving, partly threatening, and ended by declaring that if he did not come for one minute, even if he gave her up for ever, she would destroy herself.

"That surely will do!" cried she, as she sealed the note and sent it off.

It was returned the next morning unopened.

Mrs. Vere was at a nonplus. She could storm, she could rave, she could weep; but if Eustace were not there to see her exercise these valuable accomplishments, their power was lost.

This was a finishing stroke.

"I will be revenged, though," said she: "but that must be an after consideration; my necessities must be attended to first. I must see Barton."

She wrote immediately, and that amiable personage, with his quiet step and angelic smile, presented himself early the next day in obedience to her commands.

Little did the dear creature know what was in store for him!

However, Mrs. Vere soon enlightened him. In a plain matter-of-fact way, without tears, sobs, or hysterics, she put before him the state of the case, and coolly called upon him to extricate her from her difficulties.

Mr. Barton was thunderstruck. He was too appalled to find words wherein to express his dismay. Mrs. Vere, who, like all West

Indians, had not too much cool blood in her veins, broke out in a rage:—

"Now, what's the use of staring so like a fool, Barton? You know what must be done. I say, must! So no more words, but look over these accounts and give me a check."

What must be done, must! Alas! the Reverend Nathaniel knew that to his cost. It was very well for her to talk thus peremptorily; but really for a man, with so many little wants as he possessed, to be called upon at a moment's notice for a cool hundred or so, was no joke.

But he was in her power; and he knew that under that childish, silly, giggling way of hers, there lurked a spirit that wouldn't have disgraced a tigress.

He knew he must submit; therefore, when he broke silence, he wasted no time in unnecessary questions: but fell to work, and arranged matters with (considering his clerical habits) a good deal of worldly foresight.

"And what do you propose doing?" cried he, at last—the landlord's bill having been produced, the rent paid, notice given to quit, and a check handed over to cover her other expenses; "Where do you intend going?"

"To some of my friends," returned she, with an air of perfect unconcern. "Couldn't I come and stay at your house for a time? I should think," added she, with a sneer, "I might be of use to that plain, dowdy wife of yours, if it were only to teach her how to put on her clothes."

Mr. Barton shook his head.

That plain, dowdy wife of his, had a decided will of her own; and she had a particular aversion to inviting any of his fair friends into her stronghold.

That plan, therefore, wouldn't answer. He was in a fix what to do. To provide for the little hyena before him troubled him much. At last a plan presented itself, and he asked:—

"Whether she would have any objection to go abroad?"

"No, not in the least, if it is with some personable creature, who has plenty of money. I confess I should hate going abroad with any one who has not, because I like good living; and you never get that at second-rate inns."

Mr. Barton hastily assured her that she would have no cause to complain, seeing that it was no less a personage than the great

Miss Child Hoare with whom he meant to place her.

"She was speaking to me of having a lady to travel with her for company. If I can manage it, it will be just the thing for you."

Mrs. Vere agreed that it would. She rather liked the notion of a change. She was disgusted with London, and everything that served to remind her of the now hated Eustace. For if at the bottom of her little worldly, frivolous, selfish heart, there lurked one feeling less selfish than another, it was the species of passion (we will not honour it with the name of love) which she had felt for Eustace.

Now that feeling was turned to the bitterest hate.

It galled her to breathe the very air that he did; and though he was lost to her through her own duplicity, she looked upon herself as the injured person.

Added to which, a secret conviction that the downfall of her power would be the renewal of Millicent's, drove her almost upon the verge of insanity.

Had she no means of torturing her triumphant rival?

Yes! she had! and those she would use.

Three days after her conversation with Mr. Barton he announced, with no little pride and satisfaction, that all things were arranged with Miss Child Hoare; that she would be delighted to receive Mrs. Vere; and that, during her stay with her, a yearly sum of two hundred pounds would be placed to her account at her banker's.

This was very refreshing after her late storms; and Mrs. Vere was as much pleased as her reverend friend. But before leaving England she had a little account to settle with Eustace Neville.

She collected together all the letters Eustace had written to her in his first days of passion, put them in a blank cover, and enclosed them to Millicent.

Millicent was sitting with her husband when the parcel was put into her hand. She opened it most unsuspiciously, and seeing a quantity of letters, uttered an exclamation of surprise.

Eustace looked up.

"What does all this mean?" and taking up one of the letters, he recognised his own writing.

His dark face flushed up to the deepest crimson.

"The heartless devil!" muttered he, in a tone of suppressed passion. "She would destroy my happiness, if she could! But I dare her to it. Millicent,"—and he spoke almost sternly—"these letters are sent you by Mrs. Vere. They were all written by me to her. Read them. I have no secrets from you now."

"Never!" cried Millicent, firmly. "Do as you like with them, Eustace;" and she put them back into his hands.

"Are you sincere, Millicent?" looking her searchingly in the face. "Have you no curiosity, no wish to see what is in them? No desire," added he, bitterly, "to see what a fool your husband made of himself?"

"None!" said Millicent, returning his steadfast look. "I am only truly thankful that she has sent them, as now she cannot show them to any one else."

"You are as near an angel, Millicent, as it is possible for mortal woman to be; and if you are really sincere, I say, let us burn them, and thus end all trace of such a worthless woman."

"Say, rather, mistaken and misguided," corrected Millicent, gently.

"Be it so, my love! You are right." And Eustace took up the letters, and placing them in the polished grate, lighted a match, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing nothing but a heap of ashes.

Millicent watched the last dying spark; then, pressing her husband's hand in hers, said, in a low tone:—

"Now we have not a thought unknown from each other."

"Only one, my Millicent!" returned he.

She looked at him with inquiring eyes.

"You will never know how much I love you!"

CHAPTER X.

EVERYDAY LIFE.

THREE years have passed away in unbroken tranquillity. As Millicent and her husband did not flourish in the days of romance, no wonderful good fortune befell them. No rich relation died and left them an unlimited fortune. No maiden lady, no benevolent bachelor, encountered Clarence in his daily walks, and declared him their heir.

Their life during this period, I am forced to confess, was the most prosaic and matter-of-fact that, in the course of my experience, I have ever had to record. It just consisted in one unbroken round of daily duty.

After much difficulty, Eustace had succeeded in obtaining a situation as clerk for foreign correspondence in a Manchester house in Wood Street, City.

Norman had offered him a situation in his

office—a sort of secretaryship; but Eustace could not reconcile himself to the idea of daily communion with any one he had formerly known, and therefore, though with much gratitude, declined it.

They had obtained a cheap and respectable lodging in a detached cottage in Whitehead's Grove, Chelsea, whither they had removed from Orchard Street, and in which they had remained ever since.

Eustace went every morning, per boat, to the City, and returned at night by the same smoky but convenient conveyance. Their life was so exact and precise that they could not have told wherein one day differed from another.

Eustace met with no extra favours. Messrs. Buchan and Waller did not treat him in any way differently from their other clerks. Like most Scotchmen, they were chary of their words; after the first month, during which time an old greyheaded clerk initiated him into his duties, and he received from the partners full particulars as to how they expected those duties performed, he rarely or never exchanged a word with them.

Punctual also, like most Scotchmen, they

paid him his salary to a moment. The cheque was made out and ready signed before they called him in to receive it. A bow from Eustace, a quiet "Thank you," and that rite was ended.

Eustace formed no friendships with those around him, and there was such a coldness in his manner that the boldest clerk in the establishment would have quailed ere he had ventured on any freedom or practical joke with him. No slapping on the back, no "Neville, my boy," as was their wont with one another when they all clustered together on first coming to the office of a morning. But he was much respected, and they showed that respect by leaving him alone.

None, save the heads of the firm, knew his private address, for he would have deemed it a sacrilege to have introduced any of his fellow-clerks to Millicent, even if he had liked their company himself. In his eyes she was still the Mrs. Neville of Brook Street; and though living on a pittance, was not to be defiled by the vulgar gaze of the multitude.

They had long vanished out of the sight of the fashionable world, and the cold waves of society had rolled over the spot that had

once been theirs, and effaced every trace of where they had reigned supreme. Men had missed him at their clubs, women had missed her at their fashionable parties, and for a brief space they had speculated as to what had become of them.

Some suggested one thing, and some another.

Rumour furnished innumerable tales.

She sent them to the four quarters of the globe at once.

One day, Eustace and his family had gone to join his partners.

Another, that he was gone to Sierra Leone.

A third, that he and his wife were coming out upon the stage.

A fourth, that he had been seen serving in a store at New York.

In either way they were exiled from their old associates.

Truly poverty is punished as a great crime!

And in the same way as they disappeared from the fashionable world, and refused all invitations to join the family circle, they imperceptibly faded away from the family recollection. For "out of sight out of mind,"

is a common, but remarkably truthful observation. Cherry and Blanche had gone down to Whitehead's Grove a good deal at first; but when they married, Millicent, anxious to spare her husband the unpleasant necessity of being visited by the well-to-do second-rate men who had married her sisters, contrived to make her father understand that she and Eustace would be much happier if they were left alone.

Mr. Morley sympathised with his daughter in her feelings, and managed so well that, without giving any offence, Millicent and her husband were left to enjoy their poverty in peace.

Good Mrs. Morley was the only one that demurred; but even she succumbed to her husband's authority, and contented herself with attending all the births, christenings, and other great events that took place in the domestic households of Geraldine and Blanche.

Poor Millicent might have found her life rather dull, but for the never-ceasing care bestowed upon her darling boy.

She educated him herself; and that, and the care of the clothes both for her husband and herself, occupied her time so much that she had no leisure for useless regrets.

Then her father, in his quiet and unobtrusive way, every now and then contrived to waylay Eustace and take the boat home with him, and partake of Millicent's frugal repast; and as Eustace had never objected to Signor Martelli, the good old man would come down laden with gifts for Clarence, and help to enliven their monotonous life.

Violet was still at school—not the one where she had met Millicent's sisters; the Signor had placed her at a still more expensive establishment, and was sparing no pains to perfect her education.

"Next year," said he to Millicent, after they had been settled some time at Chelsea, "I shall take her to Italy, bring her out at San Carlo, and then, doubtless, she will obtain an engagement here; and my name is not Martelli if she does not prove one of England's most favoured prima donnas."

Millicent fully agreed with the Signor as to the wisdom of the plan he had chalked out, but could not repress a sigh when she thought of the sorrowing old man in the West Indies, and his dearly loved but still unrecovered son.

Eustace frequently heard from his uncle,

who strenuously urged him to come out with his wife and child; but Eustace dreaded the effects of the climate on those treasured objects of his affection, and therefore declined the offer.

Mr. Neville was still unremitting in his inquiries, but though Signor Martelli kept up a perpetual search, no trace of the prodigal had yet been found.

He wrote that he was not coming to England again. The embarrassed state of his affairs partly prevented him, and his failing health rendered a journey out of the question at present.

Millicent grieved for him as she pictured him aged and lonely, without son or grandchild to comfort him.

Violet was now quite a woman, not tall, but gracefully and elegantly made; her dark lustrous eyes, her abundant hair, her haughty carriage, fitted her, more than mere beauty could, for the life she was destined to embrace.

And she passionately loved her profession.

All her ambition was to make a name—a glorious name, such a one as should compensate a thousand-fold for any she might have inherited.

She was already a little known in the musical world. At the holidays she had sung at a few private parties, and great things were beginning to be whispered about her voice. So much so, that the Signor hastened his projects, took Violet away from school, and determined on taking her to Italy immediately.

He let his house for a time, settled his affairs, and with Violet and the faithful Paulina departed for the sunny land of the South.

The Nevilles felt his loss most severely. Eustace had become so accustomed to see him once or twice in a week, that he felt quite lonely at first, and as to Clarence, now a fine and strikingly beautiful boy, he audibly lamented the loss of his darling *padre*.

"Never mind," was Millicent's comforting remark; "the time will soon pass away, and he will come back, and we shall be so happy."

Poor Millicent before Signor Martelli returns! you will think all your happiness over in this world.

CHAPTER XI.

PESTILENCE.

LONDON is sometimes visited with severe mortality.

It is always the theatre of intense suffering.

But handsome houses, clean, well-lighted streets, good magistrates, an effective police, keep all that is disagreeable out of sight.

None but those who are willing to do their Master's work know what passes in this great city.

Who would, from choice, visit the dark arches under Waterloo Bridge?

Who would penetrate the death-stricken alleys of Drury Lane?

Who would venture into the crime-stained streets of St. Giles's?

None but those who, taking up their cross, "leave all," saith our Lord, "and follow me." They know what is borne by our unmurmuring

fellow-beings,—fellow-beings who, when they shake off this mortal coil, shall be as the angels, and rest in the bosom of their God. What is a short life of luxury here, compared with an eternity hereafter?

But the sons and daughters of pomp think not of these things in their gay revels and painted masks; and men die, and women groan, and they go on their way rejoicing, as if there were no end to the present and no eternity.

But now and then the tears, and the sighs, and the mighty woes of the suffering poor, rise up to the throne of Him who knoweth all things! And then His wrath breaketh bounds, and Pestilence, His sure and destroying Messenger, walketh the land!

Pestilence,—bitter, baleful, unpitying pestilence,—passed over London!

It spared nor age, nor sex, nor station.

Poverty could not escape it, wealth could not avoid it.

It entered unseen the palaces of the great, and murmuring and lamentation went through the land!

Nobles sat and shivered in their princely mansions, and a mortal terror seized upon their empty minds.

What was the use of their rent-rolls, their stately houses, their retinue of servants, their bars and their bolts, if the same pestilence that laid low the beggar at their gates was to claim them as an offering also?

They began to have a faint glimmering that, though they might make laws and enforce them, they were no match for the silent desolator.

He left traces of his footsteps in diminished households, in increasing graveyards!

Then pride gave way, and fell from its high estate; and prince and peasant, beggar and noble, knelt side by side to pray God, in His mercy, to withdraw the destroying angel. And the voice went up to Him who is never deaf to the cry of the desolate.

Then the pestilence was stayed.

But how many houses were decimated? how many children sat parentless? how many parents cried aloud for their little ones? how many sat desolate and alone?

Among these was Millicent; for the pestilence had stricken down her dear, her kind father! So sudden was Mr. Morley's death, that it struck terror into all their hearts.

He had returned from the City as usual,

and before the morrow's sun had gone down he had entered into the unfathomable mystery!

Poor Mrs. Morley was bowed to the earth! She could not believe in the reality of her loss, but was thunderstruck at this great, this irremediable misfortune!

Even the presence of her children, and their dutiful attentions, failed to rouse her.

In her simple way, she had so devotedly loved her husband.

Millicent was inexpressibly grieved. Her father had been so good, so considerate; had watched over her during these sad days of poverty and seclusion with such tender care, that she felt his loss to be irreparable.

Then her terrors were awakened, and she trembled for her remaining treasures.

"If God, in His anger, should take her beloved husband—her darling child! That husband, whose worth manifested itself day by day!"

In mortal terror she fell upon her knees and prayed God, in His mighty power, to show mercy.

Who that ever prayed to God sincerely, did not feel comforted?

Millicent did, and strengthened also; and

in soothing the sorrows of her helpless mother forgot her own.

Mr. Morley's death made a great alteration in the Guildford Street household: he had ever been a very just man, never in debt, so his affairs were soon wound up.

The business was to be carried on in trust for the widow, until his second son, Tom, was old enough to assume the reins of government. Josiah, disgusted with the confinement, had renounced it long ago, and entering the army, was at the present time serving in India. The rest of his property was left wholly and solely to his widow for her life-time, and then to be equally divided among his children.

He had appointed Norman his chief executor, and as there could be no dispute about such a plain document, it was satisfactorily arranged, and all formalities gone through without loss of time.

As Mrs. Morley could hardly be considered in a sane condition, Norman thought, as the younger children were at school, she had better go and reside with Geraldine and her husband, and Tom make a home at the office.

Mrs. Morley passively consented; she was

in that state of mind that it was rather a relief than otherwise, and, accompanied by old Hannah, she went with Geraldine to their house at Brixton, fully persuaded that it mattered not where she laid her head for the time that must intervene before she joined her beloved husband in the land of rest.

But this break-up of the home of her childhood was a sad blow to Millicent, for though she did not go much to Guildford Street, still it had been a haven of rest in case of need. Of her brothers-in-law she knew but little, save that they were good, honest men; but whom she shrewdly suspected of thinking her husband a proud upstart when rich, and a sour misanthrope when poor.

Millicent felt that she was estranged from her family, but she was too honest not to acknowledge that it was partly her own fault and that of her husband. They had rejected the kindnesses of their relations when they were offered, and when they would have accepted them they found them not. And, truly, theirs was rather a desolate look-out.

The Signor was still in Italy, and no chance of returning yet awhile.

Good-hearted Mr. Jones sometimes managed to run down and see them: but his duties were legion, and he had but scant time to waste in visiting. Not that Millicent was ever dull, but she did at times fear that Eustace would miss many companions of his own sex.

But they had hardly settled down, and the acuteness of their grief worn off, when Eustace came home one evening, rather earlier than usual, and announced that he had just received notice to leave.

"Not for any fault of mine," added he; "but it seems they only required a clerk till Mr. Buchan, the senior partner's eldest son, should be ready to fill the place. He has just returned from Germany, and comes down to the office to-morrow, so that I may be able to make him well acquainted with his duties before I leave."

"I think they might have told you before," said Millicent, indignantly. "It is a very short notice they give you, and so faithfully as you have served them!"

"It is the legal one, my Millicent," returned Eustace, with a faint smile; and a very faint one it was, for he felt sick at heart as he

pondered over his chances of getting a new situation. For he did not like to tell Millicent that, before leaving the City he had walked as far as Leadenhall Street, and intimated to her brother Tom that it would be a great help to him if he could receive him into his counting-house.

Eustace thought that the young man would have accepted his offer with pleasure. Instead of which, he met with a direct refusal; and that in such an ill-bred, purse-proud manner, that he mentally resolved to starve ere he made application again in that quarter.

The truth was, that Mr. Tom was beginning to think himself a very fine young man, and his vain, silly heart, was not proof against the universal respect that was paid to him.

He quite forgot the time when he had blushed with pleasure if Eustace only addressed a word to him. He forgot the delight with which he had made one in Eustace's box at opera or theatre, and the rapture with which he had hailed his munificent gifts; his tips of sovereigns when going to school; his boast there of his rich brother-in-law and Upper Brook Street; his enumeration of all Millicent's carriages, horses, and jewels, to

his admiring and envying schoolfellows;—he forgot all the past, and remembered only the present.

This magnificent brother-in-law had diminished into a merchant's clerk. Mr. Tom was ashamed to own him. Have him in his office! (his office!) on no account! Perhaps be called "Tom" by the pale, care-worn man that stood before him! For Eustace was care-worn; and when he turned from Tom's flippant slights his heart ached, as he recollected that it was only what he deserved—retribution dealt by the hand of the brother for injury inflicted on the sister!

But he was becoming purified by misfortune, could see the justice of the blow dealt him, and kissed the hand that smote him.

He turned from the office a sorrowful, not an angry man. But it did not do to show a desponding face before Millicent. He had obtained a place, he must hope to do so again. He reminded Millicent that he was better off now than he had been three or four years ago, for now he had an excellent recommendation, and a thorough knowledge of business.

Millicent thought of her brother's office

directly, and asked Eustace if he would have any objection to share it with Tom.

Eustace could hardly repress a smile, as he thought of that young gentleman's recent conversation with himself; but unwilling that Millicent should be pained by knowing how discourteously he had been treated, said, decisively:—

"Most decidedly, Millicent. After what has passed, no power on earth shall make me apply to any of your friends or relations."

Millicent said no more; she thought Eustace referred to the conduct of Geraldine's husband, which she saw enough of at the time of her father's funeral to be sure that Eustace would shrink from applying to him.

She thought of Norman: perhaps Eustace would overcome his reluctance, and accept the offer which she knew Norman would still make him: at any rate she would write to Norman, and get him to speak to Eustace on the subject.

But her heart failed her, when the next day she received a note from Norman, saying that his mother's health was so bad that, as a last resource, the doctors had ordered Nice or

Pau, and that he should accompany her, and write as soon as ever they were settled.

A sense of desolation fell upon her. Her father dead; her mother as good as dead—dead in the spirit if not in the flesh; the Signor abroad; and now Norman, her last hope, departed also. A strange presentiment of coming evil enshrouded her.

The next day, as she was sitting musing sadly over the note that lay in her lap, memory carried her back to by-gone days, to the old drawing-room in Guildford Street. Again she saw Norman. His honest, frank, manly voice rang in her ears; his fervent blue eyes, so sorrowful, so heart-stricken; his utter despair; and her heart reproached her.

"I ruined his happiness," murmured she. "He has never married—never will. I have consigned him to a cold, joyless existence. And——"

She paused. Had she been happy? No! Hers, at best, had been but a fitful, strange, feverish dream. She had married the man of her heart, but had known little of happiness."

"But I will not murmur," said she, re-

solutely; and taking up her work, was beginning a vigorous onslaught on one of Master Clarence's shirt collars, when a cab drove up to the door, and to her extreme terror she saw Eustace, assisted by the driver, get out.

Sarah was out (she had Sarah still), gone with Clarence into Brompton, to purchase some things that were wanted. But without thinking of that she rushed down-stairs to let him in.

"What is the matter, Eustace?" said she, in the utmost alarm.

He did not answer—she led him up-stairs into the room; placing him on the sofa, removed his hat. A large, deep, frightful wound, appeared on his forehead.

"Good heavens, Eustace!" cried she. "What is the matter? What has happened?" But Eustace could not speak. He sank back on the sofa, and gasped for breath.

"O God!" cried she, in her terror, seeing him sink back, apparently lifeless. "Oh, speak, I conjure you! I must get assistance," springing to the bell; but her frantic cries brought him back to life. He roused himself by a violent effort, and said in a husky voice:—

"I shall be better soon, Millicent. Don't

be alarmed, my darling! I shall be better in a minute or so: but I longed to come to you," enfolding her in his poor weak arms. "Come home to you, Millicent, if only to die upon your breast!"

Millicent kissed him gently; and then, though her heart felt breaking, went through the folding-doors to her bedroom, and brought out some sal volatile and gave it to him. This done, she bathed his temples with eau de Cologne; and thus strengthened, he was enabled to sit up and tell his story.

"A few words will suffice, my darling! God forbid that I should shock your pure nature with the account of an unseemly brawl; but this morning a man walked into my office, seized me by the collar, told me he had been years hunting for me; that now he had caught me; that he had watched me for weeks; that he would leave a mark upon me, that should prevent my ever ruining any other honest man's daughter; and finally, ere I could free myself from his grasp, he dealt me this blow with a life-preserver, and walked out of the office.

"And what became of the wretch?" cried Millicent.

"He was secured; but I was rendered quite insensible by the force of the blow, and I believe remained so for some length of time. When I came to myself, I found a doctor had been sent for; and I fancy he considers that I have sustained a very severe injury."

"I had better send for a surgeon now," said Millicent, anxiously.

"No, my darling, you must do no such thing; he could do me no good. I dare say I shall be better to-morrow, but I must expect to feel the effects for some time. The worst of the matter is, my Millicent, that I shall not be in the best condition to look for a new situation."

"You must not even dream of it," cried Millicent, eagerly. "You must think of nothing but getting well. I shall get you to bed," said she, rising, "and you must there lie down and keep perfectly quiet."

"I would rather lie here, my darling, and see you as long as I can."

Millicent's voice choked, but she was careful not to betray her agitation. What was it in his words that sounded so like a knell in her ears? She looked searchingly at him, as if struck by some sudden fear, and her pulses

almost ceased to beat as she noticed the pale, care-worn expression of his face. What a world of sorrow had left its impress upon that once gay and lightsome countenance!

And for the very sin which he had committed in the heyday and fever of life's young blood, now, in his day of amendment, he met retribution.

"Eustace," said Millicent, "that dreadful man must have mistaken you for your cousin!"

He nodded an affirmative—he did not speak, somehow he felt sadly drowsy.

"Will he not be punished?" whispered she earnestly.

"Ah!" returned Eustace, rousing himself by a great effort, "that reminds me I am to attend at the Mansion House to-morrow."

"Impossible!" cried Millicent. "Why, the exertion would kill you!" She bent down as she spoke to kiss him, and found him cold and senseless.

Wild with terror she sprang to the bell.

Mrs. Stanesby answered the summons herself, Sarah still being out with the child.

"Fly! fly!" cried Millicent, "fly, I be-

seech you, for a doctor! My husband——" she could say no more; wild shrieks filled the room; had Eustace not been in a dead trance, her agonising cries must have brought him back to life. But he was beyond the reach of earthly trouble for the present—he lay in a state of profound stupor.

Mrs. Stanesby comprehended nothing but that Eustace was either taken in a fit or dead; she rushed out of the room, and out of the house, and fetched the first medical man she could lay her hands upon. His calm words restored Millicent to herself.

"He is not dead, but the brain has sustained a severe concussion; you must get him to bed."

Millicent rose, all terrors, all tears, all griefs swallowed up in one absorbing sense of relief—*he was not dead!*

CHAPTER XII.

TROUBLE UPON TROUBLE.

THE doctor's verdict was a right one. Eustace was not dead. He awoke once more to life, but not to the knowledge of what that life was. Wild, passionate delirium superseded Reason on her throne. Then it required the force of a strong man to hold him. Luckily for the sorrow-stricken Millicent, she found in her humble abode friends beyond price. The four years she had spent in that poor dwelling had not been without its good. So true it is, that if we do our duty it brings its reward.

Millicent's quiet, unaffected life, had made a great impression upon her simple-minded host and hostess, and now, in her hour of trial, they stepped forward and proved friends of great price.

Mr. Stanesby was a strong-built, powerful

man, and when Eustace was beyond Millicent's control he would come up-stairs and keep him within bounds till the force of the seizure died away. Millicent was deeply grateful for this unexpected aid and kindness, the more so as she did not particularly like the medical attendant; but she had no choice — Mr. Jones was so fully occupied it would have been impossible for him to come, and she disliked to write to the old prosy, snuffy doctor who had been the family practitioner in Guildford Street. Besides which, she had no time for anything but ministering to her husband. He seemed to have an unconscious knowledge of her; his eyes followed her, and, except when fever was at its height, her voice calmed him. Night and day, without intermission, she sat and watched every change that passed over his wan and altered countenance, now flushed crimson red, now whiter than the pale face that bent so untiringly over him. She could give no thought for any one else: her heart and soul were bound up in the frail, perishing form that was fast wearing life away by inches. Even her child was forgotten. Poor little Clarence could not exactly make out what had happened, but his tender heart

understood that his dear papa was ill, and therefore he must not expect his mother to read and talk to him. Sarah was a host in herself to her poor mistress; and thus, without any distinction of rank or station, did these three poor women do their utmost to save the expiring lamp from going out before their eyes into utter darkness.

"Save him, O Lord! save my husband!" was Millicent's daily despairing cry.

In the midst of all these accumulated woes she found herself without money. Her first impulse was to write to Norman. She penned a few hurried lines, but when she came to direct the letter, she remembered he had not written as he promised, and she did not know where to address it. Her only resource was to send it to his chambers. It was most distressing, but what could she do better? Nothing; so she sent it, with strict injunctions for it to be forwarded immediately. Then she sat down to reflect on what she should do in the interim. To whom should she apply for assistance? Her mother! In the multiplicity of her troubles she had forgotten her, and also Geraldine. With a beating heart she wrote a few lines, explain-

ing her distressed situation, and imploring of Geraldine and her mother either to come or to send her assistance. Then she flew back to her husband, and forgot that the world contained aught but himself.

The letters reached Brixton when Geraldine and her husband were at breakfast. She read the one addressed to herself, and with tearful eyes put it into her husband's hands.

"My dear Archibald, I must go directly." She rose in extreme agitation. "Poor, poor Millicent! what she must suffer!"

Mr. Hayman read the note through with stoical composure, and then, begging Geraldine not to agitate herself, said coldly:—

"You see, my dear, this is a very awkward business, and one that I should not like you, as my wife, to interfere in. You are not aware (for I thought it best to say nothing on the subject) that Mr. Neville has lost his situation entirely through his own misconduct. I heard only yesterday that his illness proceeds from a severe blow inflicted on him by the outraged father of one of his victims."

"Then you knew he was ill!" cried Geraldine, in a surprised and not over-gracious tone.

"Not to the extent that this note mentions; nor do I believe he is as bad as Millicent makes him out. Doubtless her fears have magnified the danger."

"But I may go to her?" returned Geraldine anxiously.

"Most decidedly not!" answered Mr. Hayman. "Now listen, Geraldine, and don't put yourself out of the way. I know a little more of life than you do. Mr. Neville will never get another situation; he has quite lost his character through this affair, and I cannot afford to have him, his wife and child, entirely upon my hands."

"But surely, Archibald," persisted Geraldine, the blood flying to her face, "you do not wish me to desert my sister? Besides which she has written to mamma."

"Your mother is not in a state to be troubled with such matters," putting the letter into his pocket as he spoke. "I shall answer this at my office."

"But of course, Archibald, I may send Millicent some money?" cried Geraldine, now fairly sobbing. "You won't be so cruel, will you, as to let me leave my own sister to starve?"

"She has other relations besides you. Let her write to Blanche, she is better able to assist her than we are; what with the prospect of our increasing family, and the fluctuating state of things, I can do nothing. Besides which," added he sententiously, "it is against my principles; I will never assist a man of Mr. Neville's character."

Geraldine was silent; she knew how hopeless it was to combat her husband's inflexible will. She had learnt by experience that there are worse points in a man's character than a gay reputation. But she determined to make one more effort, and drying her eyes she said, with something of her old curtness:

"Mr. Hayman, you can do as you please, but I shall not leave my darling sister to the mercy of strangers. Whether you like it or no, I shall go to Millicent, and that this very morning."

"I lay my solemn commands upon you, Geraldine, not to do so," returned her husband, his face white with suppressed passion. "Disobey me, if you dare! I am a man of few words. Quit my house for that of your sister's, and you never enter my doors again so long as my name is Archibald Hayman."

Geraldine stared at her husband in incredulous surprise, but not a muscle of his face moved; and there was a cold, stony glitter in his eyes, that told her he was in earnest; her courage gave way, and she burst into tears.

"Now be sensible, Geraldine," said he, in a softened tone, "and be guided by your husband, who knows a little more of the world than you do. Take my advice, rest quiet for the present. If anything material happens I shall be sure to hear of it in the City. God knows, I have no dislike to your sister, but I must be just to the interests of my own family."

"But Millicent," sobbed Geraldine, in a tone that told she was coming round, as most wives do, to her husband's views, "whatever can I say to Millicent?"

"Say nothing," returned Mr. Hayman. "I will answer for you—I must answer the letter addressed to your mother, for in her precarious state of health any unexpected excitement might cause her death;" but Mr. Hayman did not add, that as he received a very liberal sum for her board and lodging

that would be an extremely inconvenient event.

"And Geraldine," said he at parting, after having, as he considered, brought his wife into a proper state of subjection, "Geraldine, I beg that you don't tell that foolish old Hannah a word of this; she will only go and distress your mother: and in that case," added he menacingly, "you might cause her death!"

Geraldine promised a faithful but sad obedience—she could do no less. She had not a farthing she could call her own, and though she lacked nothing, never knew where to lay her hand upon a shilling of money. A maiden sister of her husband's lived in the house, and she dared not cross the threshold of the door without her as an escort. For Mr. Hayman was intensely jealous, and, like most jealous persons, intensely suspicious.

Yet he was a pattern husband—went to church regularly, held the plate on charity-sermon days, gave his guineas regularly to the public institutions, took the chair at Bible meetings, formed one on the platform at

Exeter Hall, and was held up as a model in the neighbourhood of Brixton.

Geraldine cried a little as she thought of Millicent, and the memory of childish days rushed back upon her heart; but she had not seen her sister for many months, and she had faded as it were out of her mind; and at last she reasoned herself into the belief that Archibald must be, as he always was, right, and that Millicent would find friends elsewhere. Still, many times during the day, the thought of her sister's distress haunted her, but she did her best to stifle the feeling; and so far succeeded, that when her husband returned she met him with a calm and composed countenance.

In the meanwhile, Millicent, who never dreamed but that her sister would instantly fly to her assistance, sat in a state of painful expectation, thinking every ring of the bell would bring Geraldine to her arms; but as the day wore on, and no Geraldine made her appearance, a sickly apprehension, lest she too was out of town, took possession of her heart. Great, therefore, was her relief when Sarah brought her a letter, the handwriting of which she recognised as that of Mr. Hayman.

She tore it open and read the following words: —

"My dear Mrs. Neville,

My poor Geraldine is in such a nervous frame of mind, just recovering from a severe confinement [baby was only six months old], that I have undertaken to answer for her. I deeply regret the painful situation in which you are placed, brought on (forgive me for saying so) by the reckless conduct of Mr. Neville, and which, alas! has brought upon him severe retribution. Of course I know of all that occurred at Messrs. Buchan and Waller's, and you must not be shocked if I say that holding as I do a somewhat high position in society, it is not pleasant to be claimed as a relation by such a man. I do not say this from any wish to wound your feelings, but to show you how impossible it is for me to allow my wife, Mrs. Hayman, to accede to your request of going to you, even if she were in health, which she is not. The state of my finances and the increasing claims of my young family preclude my offering any pecuniary assistance, which otherwise I should have been happy to have done. As to your mother, her

health makes any appeal in that quarter out of the question. I can say no more, except that I sincerely trust you will soon be released from the disagreeable position in which you are now placed, and fervently praying that you will seek aid and comfort where alone it is to be found,

Remain, my dear Mrs. Neville,

"Very faithfully yours,

"ARCHIBALD HAYMAN.

"P.S. If I may presume to advise, I should say, you had better apply to your sister Blanche, or to your old friend Mrs. Frank Melville."

The letter dropped from Millicent's hand; burning indignation filled her breast. And this was from Geraldine's husband! this was all the pity, all the mercy, that Geraldine could show to her, in her hour of bitter distress! To allow herself to be a party to such a letter as that! She spurned it with her foot, and stamped upon it.

Her husband to be so insulted! now, too, that he was unable to defend himself! Yet that husband, with all his faults, had generously

given back her marriage portion to be divided among her sisters.

Write to Blanche,—get another such letter!—No! not if she coined her heart's blood into money. Nor to Mrs. Melville either; if her own sister were so changed, her own flesh and blood so tiger-hearted, what had she to expect from a mere friend?

Friends!—she laughed at the word. But something must be done; money must be obtained. After this, it was no use waiting for an answer from Norman; he, too, might be changed. She would depend on no one, but on the mercy of God; she would arise and help herself.

Some of her husband's salary must be due. Aye! and she would go for it. Yes! she, the tenderly-nurtured daughter, the luxuriously-cared-for wife, she would go to the City and demand her husband's wages as a right. She would ask no more from pity, all the softer feelings of her heart were frozen within her.

Her resolution once taken, she set about to execute it. She burnt the letter, and then summoning Sarah, told her she should have

to go out very early the next morning, and asked her if she thought she could undertake the charge of her master in her absence.

Sarah said she could; and promised faithfully not to leave him; but was frightened at her mistress's manner. There was a hard, stern look in Millicent's eyes, which alarmed the girl, and when she went down-stairs she told Mrs. Stanesby that she feared the letter she had given Millicent had worried her.

Mrs. Stanesby, being a very matter-of-fact woman, guessed the truth directly. No doubt Millicent had applied for money and been disappointed.

"Poor young thing!" added she to Sarah, after having communicated her suspicions, "she shan't worry herself on our account. I shall just go and tell her she's welcome to stay here till her husband gets better;" and she went up to Millicent and told her not to vex herself about the rent, for that she and Mr. Neville had been such good lodgers to them, they were quite contented to wait for their money till he was well and able to pay them.

Millicent took her hard, bony, corny hand in hers, and kissed it as reverently as ever she had done the white, delicate palm of our

gracious sovereign.—In her eyes at that moment Mrs. Stanesby was invested with almost an angelic beatitude. She was to her as an angel of mercy, for she afforded a shelter to her stricken husband. But she repressed her emotion; she could not afford to give way to her feelings; she had work to do, and must do it.

Early the next morning she took the Chelsea omnibus and went to the City. Mrs. Stanesby offered her services to accompany her, but Millicent, who would have felt uncomfortable at leaving Eustace only in Sarah's charge, implored of her to stay with him; which the good woman readily consented to do, and Millicent took Clarence with her by way of protection.

The noble bearing of the boy, and the delicate beauty of Millicent, struck even the unimpressible occupiers of the omnibus. There was something so out of the common way in Millicent's look, so strangely beautiful, so sorrowfully sad, that even the strangers around her felt an interest in her; and when they reached Cheapside one old gentleman was so powerfully attracted, that hearing her ask of the conductor her way to Wood Street,

he actually got out, and proffered to be her guide.

Millicent gratefully accepted his offer: she did not know a step of her way, or where she was going to; and it was a great relief to her when she found herself at the door of Messrs. Buchan and Waller's establishment.

She thanked the old gentleman warmly for his kindness, and went into the house.

To ask for Mr. Buchan, to be shown with low bows to his private office, was the work of an instant. Little did the wondering clerks and warehousemen, that stood on either side and gazed admiringly on her and her noble boy, think that the beautiful, graceful woman, who walked so grandly up the warehouse, was the wife of their degraded and dismissed fellow-clerk.

Yes! degraded. Poor Eustace had been unable to attend at the Guildhall, and the man who had dealt him such a deadly blow had told so sad a tale of wrong and misery, that the kind-hearted magistrate who sat upon the bench felt that he spoke truth, and that whatever punishment Eustace had met with he had only received his deserts!

His tale was brief. He was a coachman

in a nobleman's family at the West End, his daughter a milliner going to her daily work. It was the old, oft-told story — but there were circumstances connected with it, of the blackest dye.

He had beguiled the poor girl, little better than a child, into a place where there were none by to aid her. Vain had been her tears and entreaties. He carried his day—ended by being victor—destroyed her innocence and her happiness—left her—and never went near her again.

In her grief and despair the girl told her parents, and the father had watched patiently through a course of years to find out this slayer of his child, and be revenged.

At last fortune favoured him. He was with his daughter on board the boat, and in Eustace she recognised, as she thought, the man who had injured her. She communicated her suspicions to her father, and they followed upon his track, till they saw him go into Messrs. Buchan and Waller's, and catching hold of a porter just coming out, asked his name: the porter told it, and the sequel we know.

All this was related to the magistrate, and he, considering the provocation the father had

received, consented to take moderate bail for his appearance when called upon. This was done, and the man released; but Messrs. Buchan and Waller, who had gone to the Guildhall to hear the case investigated, went home with a very poor opinion of the morals of their late clerk, and being sedate Scotchmen, their horror and disgust was intense. So, for fear of such a bad example doing harm to the rest of their young men, they called them all together, and informed them that henceforth they must hold no communion with such a worthless character.

And to such hard, prejudiced men, Millicent has come to beg her husband's salary!

Mr. Buchan received her courteously; the sight of her feminine graceful beauty made a favourable impression: among all the ladies that came to his warehouse, he had never yet seen one so truly elegant. He in his turn made a favourable impression on the trembling Millicent,—he looked so calm and respectable.

"What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?" asked he in his blandest tones. "Open an account, I hope!" And he mechanically turned over the leaves of a ledger that lay before him.

"You mistake me," said Millicent, quieting

her agitation as she best could, "I am come upon business—I am come to ask a favour."

"Indeed!" returned the Scotchman in an altered tone: he did not like the word "favour," it sounded as the forerunner of an appeal to his pocket.

"I am the wife of one of your clerks—my name is Neville," stammered Millicent.

"Ah!" was the still more laconic answer of Mr. Buchan, the whole character of his face changing in an instant: then he added, "I am sorry for it."

"Why so, sir?" answered Millicent, proudly, regaining her self-possession. "My husband can have done nothing in your house to warrant your making such a remark."

"Aye, aye!" returned the Scotchman impatiently, somewhat daunted by the proud determination of Millicent's voice. "I meant no offence, but my time is precious: what have you come to me for?"

"For the money owing to my husband," returned Millicent, her heart dying within her at Mr. Buchan's chill tone of voice; "and it would be a great convenience to me, if you would pay me whatever is owing."

"You ought to know that his quarter is

not expired yet; it is not the rule of our house to pay by the week, and he has not been here for the last two or three weeks. When do you think he is likely to return?"

"Never!" cried she, her pent-up feelings giving way at the forlorn situation she was in. "Never! he is dying!" She covered her face with her hands, and wept bitterly.

Mr. Buchan was both shocked and distressed at the sight of her irrepressible anguish; he was not a bad-hearted man, only precise and formal. "Puir young thing!" cried he compassionately, his Scotch accent coming out strong as he gave way to his natural feelings; "puir young thing! and is he so bad as all that?"

"Alas! alas!" cried Millicent, "he is indeed. I should not have left him to-day, only I am so sadly in want of money. And oh, sir!" added she, gathering courage, "for the love of Heaven! for mercy's sake! do not think so hardly of him. I assure you, honestly assure you, he is innocent—he is not the man—it is a cousin of his: they are so alike," sobbed she. "He has been taken for him once before—his own father hardly knows the difference." And

she sank back in her chair, in an agony of hysterical weeping.

Mr. Buchan was staggered; there was such a look of truth in Millicent's face that he could not doubt her, and he remembered also that Neville, before he left, had said distinctly that the man had made a mistake, and he could prove it was not he. Mr. Buchan's heart melted. "There, dinna cry so, poor child!" said he, soothingly; "things may not turn out as bad as ye fear: your husband always seemed very temperate, and conducted himself much to our satisfaction, and I am sure, we should be loth to injure any one,—so as soon as he gets better tell him to come to us, and we will see what is to be done."

"Thank you," said Millicent humbly, and wiping her eyes. "I beg pardon for giving way so, but I was so very, very miserable."

Poor Millicent! she need not have said that, it was written in her face.

"Well, we must trust in His mercy who is above all things," said Mr. Buchan reverently; "and if He wills it, your husband may yet recover. And ye have a bonny bairn there," pointing to Clarence, who was stand-

ing in sorrowful amazement by his mother's side.

Millicent's sad eyes brightened; she was not so miserable as to be insensible to the praises of her child. What mother ever was?

"And now ye had better take a glass of wine, just to compose you; and I will give you the money due to your husband. While you drink it, I'll make out the cheque;" and the worthy merchant opened a door in the wall, and produced a bottle and a glass.

Millicent thankfully accepted the wine, though she could hardly swallow it, and could scarcely force a morsel of the biscuit he pressed upon her down her throat; however, Clarence munched up the hard Abernethy, much to Mr. Buchan's satisfaction.

"There is the cheque, and my cashier shall cash it for you," said Mr. Buchan kindly. "You see, your husband's quarter is not near due—not above a third over; so I cannot, in justice to my partner, pay the whole: but I will take upon myself up to the half quarter."

Millicent was most grateful; she did not in the least know what was owing to her husband, and was only too thankful to be paid at all.

Mr. Buchan was as good as his word. His cashier cashed the cheque, and then the same functionary saw Millicent and her boy safe to the omnibus. And so true is the sympathy of an honest English heart, that though by the time she left, every soul in the warehouse knew who she was, not one curious eye stared at her in passing out. It was enough for them that she was poor Neville's wife, and in great distress.

She found her husband just as she had left him: his violent fits had greatly abated, and the doctor did not tell her, did not think it professional to be explicit, or he would have said, This man has a strong constitution, he will wage fierce war with death. So long as one spark of vital energy remains, so long will you keep him, and no longer. And it was not destined to be for any space of time.

The delirium again seized him, and wild, fierce conflicts again ensued, only to leave him weaker than before. He had long ceased to recognise anything, for when not raving he lay in a profound stupor. At last things approached their crisis. He had been very outrageous, and towards night sank into a profound sleep, and Millicent, who was

watching as usual, fancied this was a good sign. She had been much perplexed all day —her money was again gone, and no letter from Norman; she debated with herself whether she should not write to Dr. Jones.

"I would rather not," murmured she, "for he is not rich. But what can I do?" She paused, and at last made up her mind to write in the morning.

It was getting late, Sarah was asleep on the sofa in the drawing-room, and she herself, worn out and exhausted, at last dozed off in the easy chair by her husband's bedside. How long she might have slept it was never destined for her to know, but she awoke with the pressure of a hand upon her arm, and, opening her eyes, saw her husband sitting up in bed.

"Eustace!" cried she joyfully, for she perceived recognition once more in those loved eyes; "Eustace, my beloved! do you know me?"

He did not answer, but drew her feebly towards him. She rose and put her arms round him. He pressed her to his breast as well as his failing strength would permit, and murmured softly:—

"Millicent, my darling, how happy I am to know you once more! Yes, once more to feel that you are mine! Millicent, I am going home; I feel—I know it. Millicent, in this last hour, when we are parting only to meet in eternity, let me implore your forgiveness. Forgive me, my wife, as I trust God, in His infinite mercy, will forgive me."

Millicent hardly breathed; her eyes dilated, her lips opened, but no sound issued through them. She essayed to speak, the words died before they were uttered. She could do nothing—say nothing—she could but look into the dying face before her; that face upon which the damp shadows of death were already settling.

"Oh! say you forgive me," muttered the dying man. "Oh, Millicent, let me hear those precious words before I go hence."

Millicent stilled her heart's throbbings; she made a mighty effort, and gasped out:

"Forgive you! Oh, my Eustace! it is I who ought to sue for forgiveness. Oh! sinful, miserable woman that I have been! and thus am I punished!"

Eustace looked at her with such an ineffable expression of love in his eyes that her

reason and fortitude gave way: all her submission—all her resignation to God—was forgotten. She could not—she would not part with him. And yet—and yet—she knew his hour was come.

He sank back exhausted.

"Millicent," said he, in the low, broken tones of death, "grieve not, we shall meet again where all sorrows are hushed, all sin wiped away." He paused, his words came with difficulty.

Millicent dared not move, dared not take her eyes from off his face, lest when she looked again he might be gone. Suddenly he rose up, his dying eyes illumined with that mysterious meaning which the last day can alone unravel; gazed upon her, as if the soul yet yearned for the object of its mortal love; sank back again. It was all over!

Millicent did not weep, did not scream. She laid the head reverently down, and stood and gazed, and gazed, as if looking at him would surely tempt him back to life. She heard not the sound of persons moving in the next room; had never heeded the loud ringing at the gate, the imperious knock at the house-door—never noticed that people were standing

round her—never saw them make way for a man wrapped in a travelling-dress, all disordered and dirty, who walked hastily up to her, and, taking her in his arms, said, with a voice broken with emotion:—

"My poor, poor Millicent! is it come to this?"

It was Norman.

CHAPTER XIII.

FRESH SCENES.

It was some days before Millicent recovered her strength sufficiently to hear how it was that Norman came just at the nick of time to save her life; for, under Providence, there is not a doubt that his care alone prevented her from sharing the grave of her hapless husband. But he watched so tenderly, took such judicious steps towards saving his treasure, that he conquered even the grim enemy himself. It seemed as if his mighty love, so long hidden and subdued, had now the power to animate the object of his affections, and restore her once more to life.

Norman was a man of great decision. On the night when he so providentially arrived he wasted no time in useless talk. He cast one glance upon the dead Eustace, another on the

fainting but still living Millicent, and his plans were formed in a moment.

"Send for a cab," were the first words he spoke.

Mrs. Stanesby wondered, but immediately went to the head of the stairs and despatched her husband to procure one.

"Now," said Norman, on her returning back into the room, "you know me; my name is Austin. I am Mrs. Neville's cousin. I am going to take her home, and her boy also. Do everything that is necessary. I will send proper people in the morning to remove the remains from your house to mine —it is not from hence that Eustace Neville shall go to his last home."

"And me, sir! I hope you will let me go with my dear mistress?" said Sarah.

"Most certainly," returned Norman, eagerly. "You must of course go with your mistress. Where is Clarence?"

"In bed, sir; but I can get him up directly."

"Do so," said Norman.

Sarah went up-stairs, roused the sleeping boy, and bade him get up and dress, for that

his Uncle Austin was below, waiting to take him and his mamma home.

"And papa?" cried the boy.

"Will come to-morrow," said Sarah, solemnly.

The boy was soon dressed. Sarah put on her bonnet and shawl, and went down-stairs with him; at the drawing-room door they met Mrs. Stanesby.

"The cab 's here, Sarah, and the poor thing is in it. The gentleman carried her down himself. Take Master Clarence and run down, he is waiting for you."

Sarah did as she was bid, and in a very short time the unconscious Millicent was lying upon a sofa in Norman's library in Russell Square.

The house was all taken to pieces: the drawing-rooms and his mother's apartments were shrouded in brown holland; but his own rooms were always kept in proper order.

The moment he had laid down his precious burden, soothed the frightened and wondering boy, who was beginning to get alarmed at his mother's death-like appearance, and persuaded him that she was fast asleep, and must not be disturbed till morning, he despatched him,

along with the housekeeper, to her room, where good Mrs. Reynolds made him some hot negus, and put him into her own bed.

This done, he sent off a messenger to bring one of the most eminent practitioners, and a particular friend of his own, to his assistance; and, in as short a space as was possible, Devonald Wade made his appearance. What he did or what he said need not be recorded here; enough that he had a hard struggle to summon back to this mortal world the soul that was already half way on its passage to eternity. But he did summon it back, and did restore her to herself; and when all that remained of the gay, fascinating, light-hearted Eustace Neville was consigned to its narrow house, Millicent, holding her child by the hand, and supported between Norman and her sister Geraldine, paid the last tribute to the dead, and saw him lowered into the grave.

"Earth to earth, ashes to ashes:" such is the end of all things!

Yes, Geraldine had been sent for by Norman the very next morning after Millicent's removal to his house, and he, ignorant of all that had passed, hailed her presence

with unfeigned joy, for his mother was still abroad. It was owing to their moving about from place to place that the letter Millicent wrote was so long in reaching him. It had been delayed owing to his desiring his head clerk not to forward any letters till he heard from him. Being vacation time, he knew there was no particular hurry about his business correspondence; and until his mother, who was very weak and very capricious, could make up her mind where she would like to pass the winter, he thought it better not to have them sent. At last she fixed upon Pau, and then Norman wrote for the budget. But, charmed with the place, and busy exploring the various lovely villages high up in the Pyrenees, he had not found time to write to Millicent. On his return from one of these expeditions his mother, who of course did not accompany him, informed him that his letters had arrived. He took them leisurely, and began looking them over. All at once he recognised Millicent's handwriting, with the word "IMMEDIATE." He tore open the letter, read it, and in less than an hour was on his road to England. He stayed not for rest, he hardly paused for food: on he went, money

clearing the way, and breaking down every obstacle. He saw but one thing in his mental vision,—Millicent, wretched, friendless, and miserable, nursing her sick husband, with none by to help her. Not that he for a moment dreamed that Geraldine would behave as she did; but she, too, might be away, and that idea lent wings to his exertions. Therefore, when he wrote off imploring her presence, he was so glad to see her that he quite forgot to ask how it was she was not with her sister at the Grove; and he never knew that he owed her presence then entirely to her husband's reverence for the great Norman Austin, and his splendid mansion in Russell Square.

Poor Geraldine! deeply repenting and conscience-stricken at having deserted her sister in her hour of bitter misery, flew to her side, and by her kind and gentle treatment endeavoured to atone, if possible, for what seemed such cold, such heartless conduct. And when Millicent was sufficiently recovered to know who was with her, the penitent Geraldine told her the truth, and begged forgiveness.

"Do not ask forgiveness for what was not

your fault," returned Millicent, taking her sobbing sister to her arms. "I never thought, Geraldine, that you had any hand in that cruel letter; and even your husband, hard as he was, I did not blame. He knew not the worth of him who is gone from us, and he judged him from what he had heard; and, alas! I grieve to say, men are oftener judged by their faults than by their virtues."

"You are very good to speak as you do," said Geraldine; "but, Milly, I can never forgive myself. To think of your being all alone that dreadful night!"

"Oh! pity me not for that," said Millicent, her face lighting with the recollection of some tender dream. "At that hour, Geraldine, I needed neither support nor succour." She paused, her self-command was giving way.

After a minute or so she resumed, pressing her sister's hand affectionately: "Let the past be forgotten; he that is now at rest would say so were he here. None know what has passed save ourselves,—let all be forgotten."

Geraldine returned her sister's caress, and the subject was never renewed again.

Norman settled all accounts, and every-

thing else at the Grove. He paid up all the arrears of rent, discharged the doctor's account, and rewarded the good Stanesbys, as they richly deserved; had all Millicent's little treasures removed to his house, and when she was able, proposed to take her back with him to Pau, and let her pass the winter there with his mother.

To this plan Millicent gladly assented. Her heart was so sorely wounded, her mind so worn and weary, her spirit so depressed, that she longed for nothing so much as to flee away and be at rest. The sight of everything that reminded her of the past, drove her to distraction. In fresh scenes in another clime, under new skies, perhaps, mused she, this quivering, trembling soul may find repose.

This being settled, Norman wrote to prepare his mother for the reception of Millicent, Clarence, and of course Sarah. Next to her child, Millicent gave this faithful domestic the second place in her heart.

Mrs. Austin was rather pleased than otherwise at the prospect of having her niece with her. She had always been very partial to Millicent, and as under her many absurdities beat a kind womanly heart, she felt positively glad at the prospect of returning

some of her good brother's kindnesses to his bereaved and widowed daughter. These kind feelings were redoubled when at last she clasped the pale, thin, ethereal-looking Millicent to her motherly breast. Was this the bright, glorious creature, she had been so proud to hail as her niece? this subdued, resigned, delicate, young widow, all that remained of the once beautiful Millicent?

But Mrs. Austin was but a very commonplace sort of person, and her very inferiority of character proved of the greatest help to Millicent. For the poor woman, after she had got over the shock of seeing her niece so greatly altered, talked to her in the same strain as if nothing had happened.

"Of course," as she sagaciously observed to herself, "it has been a great blow. I am sure, when I lost poor dear Austin, I never thought to hold my head up again."

But, considering that poor dear Austin died from a fit of apoplexy, brought on by drinking too much port wine after a hearty dinner, one cannot fancy that his loss would quite break his widow's heart.

However, her plain, unromantic nature, produced a most salutary effect upon Milli-

cent. She could not understand Millicent's shrinking out of sight and refusing to see any one, and she took it in such ill part, that Millicent, sooner than grieve her, consented to do whatever she wished.

Mrs. Austin was greatly gratified by this compliance on Millicent's part; and she was extremely proud of her, and still more so of the young Clarence, so she took them wherever she went.

Of course Mrs. Austin did not ask her to pay visits; she was much too decorous for that; although there were many English families staying in the place who would gladly have formed acquaintance with the mother of the celebrated Queen's Counsel. She, from motives of delicacy to her sorrowing niece, declined all overtures of friendship. Still there were persons with whom necessity brought them into contact. There was the cheerful, good-hearted English Doctor, who was in attendance upon Mrs. Austin, and who at Norman's request took Millicent and her boy under his special care. Also the Minister of the English Protestant Chapel, who called as a matter of course, and, struck with Millicent's interesting face, vied with Doctor Latrobe in doing every-

thing to while away her melancholy, and divert her grief.

"Make her believe that it is for the good of her child, and she will go," said Doctor Latrobe, when a visit to the Pyrenees was proposed and Millicent shrank back, and pleaded to be left at home: "any one can see that her heart is bound up in her boy."

Poor Norman felt this speech cut him to the quick, and he did think it was hard. Was all his love—his patient, untiring love—never to have its reward?

Never have its reward! It had it—had it at that moment, for a heart filled with goodness is its own reward.

But, nevertheless, Doctor Latrobe's plan proposed, Millicent sacrificed her own feelings, gave up her own wishes immediately it was suggested to her that Clarence looked pale and that a little change would do him good. As to trusting him out of her sight, even with Norman, was a thing not to be thought of. The Doctor knew that, so she went for the benefit of the child's health and profited herself by the change.

Norman left Pau the end of October. Before he did so, the wan ghastly look of

extreme misery had passed away from Millicent's delicate countenance, and a resigned calm expression had taken its place. He left her with a renewed hope springing up in his breast.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MYSTERY UNRAVELLED.

A LONG space of time has elapsed since the events happened which I have related in the last two chapters. It was the very height of the London season, and the doors of Her Majesty's Theatre were literally besieged with applicants for admission. Carriages stretched far away into the long line of the Haymarket, down Cockspur Street, quite into Charing Cross, while Charles Street, Suffolk Street, and the various outlets and safety-valves that environ that aristocratic neighbourhood, were crowded so full as to be utterly impassable. A stranger arriving in London that evening would have thought, that the whole population was gathered together for some great national thanksgiving. But he would have been mistaken: it

was simply the *début* of the prima donna of the day.

Yes! a star had risen in the musical hemisphere, and for the last two seasons had been shedding its radiance over continental cities. She had come out at San Carlo's at Naples, had sung at the Scala at Milan, had visited St. Petersburgh, electrified Paris, and, finally, was come to complete her triumph upon a London stage. For, after all, the old house in the Haymarket was the *fiat*, by which all genius had to be tested. If the aspirant could but win the unqualified regard of the exclusive *habitués* of Her Majesty's Theatre, his or her fame was henceforth founded upon a rock—a rock that nothing could shake.

And the prima donna that is to sing there that night is waiting in confident pride the certainty of her triumph. All the world, that is, all the fashionable world, were dying with impatience to see her make her first appearance; and as is the case at such moments, there was a great rush to gain admittance. For not only was there the rival singer to be heard and descanted upon, but royalty in all its state intended to honour with its

presence the first appearance of the graceful and gifted singer.

Who was she?—what was she?—where did she come from? were questions men asked each other, but could not answer. It was the eternal theme in every one's mouth. None knew who—none could say. It was whispered, that the name she sang under was an assumed one. She was simply called "the Signora Violet." Of course, my readers need not a fresh introduction to the Signora Violet. Yes! the little Violet, the child whose dulcet tones had evoked sweet music in the poor room in Green Street, was to-night going to subdue her hearers, and win their hearts by her matchless powers.

The piece was "Somnambula," and all were looking forward with rapture to hail the Amina of the evening. But if the outside of the house presented an animated appearance, the inside was still more glorious. Sparkling jewels, waving plumes, star-like flowers, danced and glittered from every corner of that once superb theatre. Elderly *veterans*, youthful beauties, brought their majesty and their loveliness to adorn the scene. And above all, in her simple, quiet grace, sat England's young

and noble Queen, rejoicing in the proud scene around her. In the pit and stalls the men mustered strong. For once the high, dignified sons of fashion, condescended to leave their clubs and jostle each other, and push as manfully as their less refined brethren on a boxing-night at an East-end theatre.

But in one small box there was an exception to the general brilliancy. A little retired from the front sat a lady in black, her golden hair passed in quiet bands across her smooth, fair forehead. Traces of deep sorrow still lurked around her mouth and in the depths of her eyes, but it was a sorrow passed away. She seemed resigned and happy,—the resignation and happiness produced by faith. She had learnt to submit humbly to the hand that had smitten her, and in returning her heart's idol to Him who gave it to say, "Lord, thy will, not mine, be done."

By her side sat a fine animated lad, whose extreme beauty and nobility of bearing brought many glasses in the direction of their box, whilst at the back, conversing every now and then with the lady, was a gentleman, in whose clear blue eyes and open brow you read the honest feelings of his heart.

It needs no wizard to find out that it was Millicent, her boy, and Norman, that occupied that box. She had come, at the earnest entreaties of the Signor, to witness the marvellous triumph of the young Violet. It was not without a deep feeling of pain that Millicent had conquered her reluctance, and once more donned the garb of fashion and ventured into her old haunts. But the Signor had so implored of her to come and witness the *début* of his darling Violet, and he had been so kind,—the moment he heard of her heavy affliction he had gone to Pau, and stayed there some considerable time, to help by his unceasing attentions to win her back to herself. Violet had done her best, too, in aiding her adopted father in this labour of love, and so successfully had she exerted herself that Millicent's widowed heart opened, and she returned her affection with equal ardour. And thus it was that she came to-night to witness the triumph she had so often prognosticated. Millicent did not live in London: she had only come up for a few days for this especial purpose, and was staying with her aunt at Norman's house; for Mrs. Austin did not die as soon as was expected, and was still flourishing

in Russell Square. Millicent had remained with her all the time she stayed at Pau, but on her return to England she objected to becoming a resident under Norman's roof. Norman had expected this objection, and provided against it. He knew that Millicent was perfectly ignorant of every thing connected with Eustace's affairs, and as the detective officer had been too sharp for Messrs. Constant and Winslow, and encountering them at a New-England boarding-house had done them the favour of affording them a free passage home to their native land, he contrived to make her believe that a very considerable part of the property had been recovered, and that out of it a small annual income had been secured for herself and child. Millicent was truly thankful, though she could not suppress a sigh of regret, as she figured to herself how joyful her beloved Eustace would have been, had he but lived to share in this good fortune. But regrets were useless; all that now remained for her to do was to fix upon a place of residence. She decided on Richmond, where a small cottage having been taken and furnished, she and Clarence, still accompanied by the faithful Sarah, removed to it.

There she remained, leading a life of complete retirement. Clarence went as day-boarder to an excellent school in the neighbourhood, and she lived on from year to year, occupied with nothing but plans for his future advancement. And Norman was well content to wait patiently, and bide his time, even if that time never came. There was something so holy, so rapt in her sorrow for the dead, that it seemed profanation to expect her to take an interest in the living. Thus, though his heart beat wildly, and his pulses glowed ardently every time he entered her presence, he never by word, look, or deed, betrayed the deep, life-long passion of his soul, while Millicent, absorbed in her ever-wailing regrets for her dead husband, noted not the strong enduring affection of her living lover.

So they lived on in mutual fellowship and good will, Norman fearing to break the heavenly calm that surrounded her, lest in the storm that ensued he should wreck all.

But the curtain is rising, and all eyes are fixed upon the stage. Millicent turned her head in that direction to catch the first glance of Amina when she appeared; as she did so, her eye fell upon a box on the grand tier, and

seated beside a very unpresuming, plain-looking woman, sat Mrs. Vere.

Yes! there she was, tricked out in all her bravery, with her false externals, her false looks, and her false heart. Millicent sickened at the sight, for she remembered that he who was now sleeping the long, long sleep of death, had once hung upon that woman's words, had believed her every protestation, and had lost his reputation, and all but doomed his soul to perdition,—for what? To save the grimacing piece of folly and sin that sat there, evidently forgetful of all that had passed, from dimming her eyes with crocodile tears. Millicent shuddered: the sight of her brought in review the whole of that part of her life with which Mrs. Vere was mixed up, from the first meeting in Brook Street to the sending back of the letters. Strange thoughts for an opera-house! Still, if the secrets of all hearts could be brought to light on a gala-night at Her Majesty's Theatres, much of strange wild life would be disclosed. Millicent did not venture to look again; had she cast a second glance, she would have seen the Reverend Mr. Barton at the back of the box.

There he sat in full feather, a little older

in appearance, a little more bent, than when we last met him in Mrs. Vere's drawing-room; not but that his life had been all fair-weather sailing, but somehow the foot-marks of time were very distinctly imprinted upon him. His head was bald, and there was a stoop in his shoulders, which gave him a decidedly aged aspect; but he was as seductive-looking as ever, and in his old peculiar attitude was whispering soft nothings into Miss Child Hoare's ears, as if time had retrograded for his peculiar benefit, and he as gay and blithe as ever he had been in the days of his first curacy. Strange that sinners should be thus allowed to flourish!

At this moment Amina made her appearance, and all thoughts were forgotten and all eyes absorbed in gazing at her. The first notes of her glorious voice were enough,—from beginning to end her performance was one continued triumph.

Not only did her vocal powers rivet all her hearers, and win their souls, but there was that in her dark Sibyl-like beauty that fascinated her beholders. Men felt their pulses throb with ecstasy, and wild and deep, and beyond wont prolonged, were the acclamations that followed

every scene. There were no hired *claqueurs* required that night to push the struggling prima donna into fame. Honest, hearty, passionate admiration, followed every word that fell from her lips.

Millicent's heart beat with pleasure; she turned her glowing cheeks upon the old Signor, who had joined them, and looked the congratulations, she could not speak.

The Signor's eyes were dim; he also had drawn upon memory, and gone back to the days of youth, when he had trodden those self-same boards, and achieved almost as great a victory. He did not speak, but pressed Millicent's hand in silence.

Meanwhile Clarence, who was not quite so enthusiastic as his companions, amused himself by looking round the house. Suddenly he touched Millicent, pointing with his finger as he did so.

"Mamma, is not that gentleman like poor papa?"

Millicent was so absorbed by what was going on upon the stage, Amina having just come out of the cottage, in the celebrated bridge scene,—was so carried away by the sight of the kneeling peasants and the slight aërial

figure, all draped in white, which seemed so surely going to destruction—that she did not heed the question until he repeated it: then, startled at the boy's words, she hastily looked in the direction Clarence pointed out.

Exactly facing her in a box, that had been vacant the greater part of the evening, sat a gentleman, who was at first glance indeed the counterpart of her lost Eustace. The same form, the same features, the same dark skin, —ah! now he smiles!—the same ivory teeth, —Millicent strained her glance to take in every point.

He was stouter—she saw that; coarser looking—she could see that also. Nevertheless he was the very double of her husband. He was not alone in the box; a lady, evidently some years his senior, sat beside him. She had an odd, outlandish sort of look; was heavily, but expensively dressed; and altogether was unprepossessing in appearance.

Millicent remained motionless some few seconds, then, touching Norman on the arm, she pointed to the box, and said:—

"Look!"

He did so, long and earnestly: then he turned to her, and his countenance answered

her unspoken words. He rose, and said to the Signor,—

"Look there! who does that man remind you of?"

The Signor did as he was bid, and raising his glass took a long and leisurely survey of the object in question; when he lowered it his cheeks were pale, but he simply said,—

"The very man we have been in search of so long."

"No doubt of it," returned Norman under his breath; then speaking to Millicent, who trembled evidently, "You are agitated — you had better go to the green-room."

"Oh! no! no!" cried she, holding by him for support: "let me go home; I would rather go home: I cannot bear to stay even under the same roof with that man. He is Eustace's murderer!"

Norman saw that she was ready to faint, and decided his course with his usual promptitude. He drew her arm within his to sustain her sinking figure, and desiring the Signor to go round to the box, and wait there till he joined him, and on no account to let the man leave, he prepared to quit the house, followed by the wondering Clarence.

The Signor nodded assent and they all left the box, poor Clarence looking very blank, as he expected to see the ballet, and had been promised a world of fairies.

"Why are we going so soon?" asked he.

"I am ill, my darling," said Millicent: "you shall come another night. I cannot stay any longer."

The boy said no more, he was too dotingly fond of his mother to care for pleasure if she could not share it.

Norman hurried them into his carriage, which fortunately had come early, and was in waiting for them. Imploring of Millicent to bear up, for that he would not leave the theatre till he had unravelled the mystery, he went back into the house to seek the Signor. He found him waiting just outside the box. No one had come out, he told Norman, and of course he had not moved.

Norman called the boxkeeper. "Do you know the name of the gentleman in this box?"

The boxkeeper referred to his list. "It is taken in the name of L. Newington, Esq.," said he, looking very curious, and as if he thought some startling discovery was about to take place.

"Another *alias!*" muttered Norman. "First Newton, now Newington. Well, at all events we will find out whether Neville is his real name, or not."

"Open the door," said he to the boxkeeper. "I think I know the gentleman; he is the cousin of an old friend of mine."

The boxkeeper looked doubtingly, but he opened the door.

Norman walked in first, the Signor following. At the sound of the door opening both lady and gentleman turned round, and their faces expressed some surprise.

"This is some mistake," said the gentleman, rising and addressing Norman. "I expect no visitors to-night, and have not the honour of knowing you."

If Norman had had a doubt, it was over now. That inexplicable resemblance in the voice, which runs through most families, proclaimed him in an instant to be the man he was in search of. Bowing with the utmost courtesy to the lady, he advanced into the box, saying: —

"There is no mistake. I have the honour of addressing Mr. Eustace Neville, son of Mr. Louis Neville of the island of Barbadoes."

Norman pronounced his last words emphatically, and saw with unfeigned satisfaction that they went home.

The gentleman turned as pale as his dark skin would permit; he trembled visibly as the name, so long disused, sounded in his ears. But he answered coldly:—

"You mistake, sir: I am not the gentleman you are in search of. I have only just arrived from Australia. My name is Newington—not Neville; at your service."

"I have made no mistake," repeated Norman firmly. "Newton or Newington, whichever name is most convenient for you to assume, but still Eustace Louis Neville."

The gentleman winced at these words, while the lady's countenance expressed the most unqualified surprise.

"What does all this mean, Louis?" asked she. "Why does this gentleman call you Neville?"

"Ah! I see, you have dropped your first Christian name, and go by your second," said Norman, with a significant smile. Then, turning to the lady, he politely added:—

"A little circumstance which demands explanation compels me to beg Mr. Neville's

company for a few minutes. If I might suggest, madam, it will be better for Mr. Neville to leave you here; I will not detain him long."

"You suggest! and who the devil are you?" cried the gentleman, savagely. "Suppose I am Louis Neville, what is that to you?"

"Nothing," returned Norman, calmly; "a fact for which I cannot be too thankful: but as you force me to speak plainly, I will tell you who I am. I am Norman Austin, Mrs. Eustace Neville's cousin; my object to-night is simply this,—Your wretched father has been seeking you for the last eight years; your cousin Eustace, the son of your father's elder brother, met his death-blow from the unhappy resemblance he bore to you—struck down by the father of one of your miserable victims; lastly, this gentleman" (pointing to the Signor) "having adopted the desolate child of one Rose, a Quadroon woman, whom you deserted, wishes to introduce to you your daughter, whom you have evidently not recognised in the prima donna of to-night. Besides which, sir, I have one or two other little matters to settle with you; so you had better come quietly, for there is quite enough evidence against you to justify my inquiries."

Mr. Neville, for it was that long-sought-for personage, felt disposed still to resist, but had no mind to gratify the curiosity of the box-keeper, who was looking on, all attention. He felt what he called "in a fix." He read in Norman's look that he was not the man to be trifled with, so, making a grace of necessity, he said, insolently enough:—

"Well, suppose my name is Neville, is that any reason it should not be Newington also? I took the name of Newington from inheriting a fortune."

"Indeed!" returned Norman, in the most unruffled tones. "You may have inherited a fortune also from the name of Newton, for aught I know. All that I want at this moment is your company for five minutes."

"I suppose I had better comply," muttered Mr. Neville. Then, turning to his wife—for in that relation the lady stood to him—he said apologetically,—"I will just go and see what it all means, and so relieve you from this disagreeable intrusion. Sit down quietly till I return; I will give orders that you are not interrupted in my absence."

"Thank you," returned the lady, tartly,

and in loud, vulgar tones: "I prefer to go and see for myself what all this is about. If your name is Neville, why didn't you say so before?"

"Oh! I will explain all another time," returned her husband; but he looked very crest-fallen, and hung his head to hide his agitation.

Norman exchanged a look with the Signor, and said aloud:—

"Will you lead the way, Signor Martelli? you know where to find the object we are in search of."

In the meantime the Opera had finished. Amina had been called before the curtain, and rapturously received; she had curtsied her respects; the manager had bowed his thanks; she had picked up as many bouquets as her slender fingers could hold; she had had her cup of felicity filled to the brim, and was now in her private retiring-room, waiting impatiently for the Signor. She had not changed her dress; her young heart was not proof against the adulation it had just received, and fresh from that adulation, in the very costume in which she had received it, she was waiting to share her triumph with her more than father. He came, and so

great was her agitation and excitement, that as he entered first she did not see any one behind; so, rushing tumultuously forward, she threw her arms around him, exclaiming,—

"My more than father! thank Heaven I have lived to repay you for your care! Oh!" she added, hiding her head upon his breast, "what do I not owe you—deserted and motherless as I was! Ah! my mother," pursued she tenderly, "if you had but lived to witness the success of your little Violet, how happy should I be!"

By this time the whole party were in the room. Lifting her head she beheld Norman, and behind him, two strangers. At the sight of so many persons the young prima donna drew herself up in stately hauteur, but advancing to Norman she held out her hand, saying:—

"Where are Mrs. Neville and Clarence? I thought I should find them here ——" She stopped, for her eyes fell upon the gentleman who was standing behind Norman, gazing at her as if in a dream.

Norman stepped back, took the now passive hand of the man, and pointing to Violet:

"Behold your daughter;" and, looking full at Violet,—"And your father."

"No father of mine!" returned the girl proudly, retreating a pace or two. "I will never own such a father!"

"Violet Newton," said Norman sternly, "this is no time for the display of pride or passion. I charge you to say, to the best of your belief, Yes, or No: is that your father?"

Violet quailed beneath Norman's stern, authoritative glance. She stood irresolute; the old pride of her infantile character was working within her. Should she, the gifted, the admired, the worshipped prima donna, in whose ears the praises of royalty were still singing—should she own the man who had betrayed her mother, and deserted her?

Norman read what was passing in her mind, and, provoked at her scornful look, said curtly:—

"You had better be quick! What is the meaning of this silence? You were ready enough to claim Millicent's husband as your father," added he, bitterly; "and persisted in doing so, even when you were wrong."

"I may be wrong again," returned she, moodily. "As I have made one mistake, it makes me the more cautious."

Norman, nettled beyond measure with her obstinacy, was just beginning to say something still more stringent, when Mr. Neville stepped up to her.

"You will not own me, so I will do that favour by you: that you are my child I see now at one glance; though you are so much altered that I did not recognise you on the stage. That you take after me is also evident, by your obstinate determination not to own what you know to be true."

"You may be—perhaps you are—my father," cried Violet vehemently; "but I will never own you as such; never, never, never pay you the duty of a daughter; never respect you as a parent! No," falling at the old Signor's feet, "this is my true father; and him only will I love as such."

"Nobody wishes to interfere with his rights," sneered Mr. Neville, as we shall now call him. "I assure you I should not have stepped forward of my own accord. You have that gentleman," pointing to Norman, "to thank for this disagreeable scene."

"Say, rather, that Violet has your wickedness to thank," interrupted Norman, severely. "And you have still some more disagreeable

scenes to go through. You don't escape me, sir, with impunity. I have now established the fact, by your own confession, that you are Eustace Louis Neville, father of Violet Kingston, and I mean you to prove to the satisfaction of all whom it may concern, that you, and not your cousin, were the destroyer of Mary Sudbury. Poor fellow! he paid dearly for the resemblance he bore you. Mary Sudbury's father, mistaking him for you, dealt him a blow that caused his death."

"I am vastly sorry," returned Neville, with perfect nonchalance.

Norman looked the disgust he felt at these unfeeling words, while, with a gesture of abhorrence, Violet drew back, and clung to the Signor. As to the cause of all this scene, he remained quite unmoved, saying, in a careless tone:—

"I think now I have given all the information that lies in my power. I have owned my daughter, and am very sorry for the fate of her mother, but beg distinctly to state that it was her own fault. She left my protection, I did not cast her off. As to the girl for whom my cousin seems to have got into trouble, I remember nothing about her. How-

ever, I am quite willing to make whatever reparation is deemed desirable; but at this moment, unless you particularly wish for my company, I should much prefer retiring, especially as my wife seems quite worn out with so much talk about nothing. I will therefore beg the favour of having my carriage called. I am staying at Fenton's Hotel in St. James's Street; any communications you may desire to make I should wish to be addressed to me there: or, if you like it better, to the care of Messrs. Lindsay and Co., my father's agents in the city."

There was such an air of cool impudence about him as he delivered these words, that it roused Norman's Saxon blood to the uttermost; but he restrained his wrath, and taking up a card Mr. Neville had just put down, said:—

"I think you are quite right; all that can be done to-night has been done: to-morrow I will call upon you and settle the remainder."

Louis bowed. Norman rose, rang the bell, and ordered the servant who answered it to have Mr. Neville's carriage sent round to the private entrance. This being done, Mr. Neville bowed, drew the arm of his scowling partner within his own, and departed.

"Well," said Norman, after a long breath, "that mystery is solved at last. Poor old Mr. Neville! I wish him joy of such a hopeful son."

"Poor man!" sighed the amiable Signor. "It is very sad; but I cannot conscientiously say that I am sorry. Had this Mr. Neville possessed any feeling, he might have claimed my darling Violet."

"Claim or no claim, I would never have left you," cried Violet, passionately. "Thank Heaven, I have attained an age when no one can force me to do what I don't like."

"Would have had a hard task, I suspect, to do that at any age, Miss Violet," retorted Norman, good-humouredly. "I flattered myself that I was as good a hand as any one at bringing refractory witnesses to know their duty, but hang me if I could manage you."

Violet laughed. "Come," said she, "you are not complimentary. Have you nothing to say of my night's performances?"

"Oh!" answered Norman, saucily, "there has been enough said before the curtain for one night. You are vain enough already, without my adding my mite to increase your store."

CHAPTER XV.

THE FINALE.

When he reached home Norman found Millicent in the library, sitting up for him. Luckily, his mother had retired to rest long before, and therefore Millicent had not been put to the trouble of explaining why she returned before the Opera was finished.

She listened attentively as Norman clearly, and with lawyer-like precision, detailed the whole of the circumstances as they occurred, from his joining the Signor at the entrance of the box, to the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Neville from the green-room.

"It is evident," added he, in conclusion, "that this cousin of poor Eustace's is about as great a scoundrel as ever remained unhung."

Millicent sighed. "You will make him go to Messrs. Buchan and Waller's, won't

you, Norman? for he alone can explain away the dreadful scandal my poor Eustace's name has so long endured."

"Yes! I will make him," cried Norman, grimly. "And when he has done all to our satisfaction, the best thing for you, Millicent, will be to forget that ever such a wretch existed."

"And Violet, how strange that she, after seeming so fond of her father, and so anxious to find him, should now, that he really makes his appearance, refuse to own him!"

"I suspect," said Norman, reflectively, "that Miss Violet is much altered since she was a little girl at school, along with Kate and Rose. She has not acquired a wide-world reputation, been fêted and feasted in every city in Europe, without thinking something of her dark little face. And to-night, of all others, just when she was intoxicated with the plaudits she had received, I fancy she was determined to let her reluctant papa see that she thought herself infinitely superior to him in every respect."

"I should think, from your description of her father, that she greatly resembled him in disposition," returned Millicent.

"Both in disposition and person," said Norman. "As she stood, looking the very personification of Pride, the likeness between them was exact. She has quite a man's expression of face."

"And a man's temper, too."

"Just so. She will require a tight hand to curb her, should she ever marry. But I expect that will be an after-consideration with the young lady; just at present, I fancy, she prefers being the idol of hosts of worshippers."

"It is a dangerous position," said Millicent. "Nothing more likely to destroy a young girl's happiness than such unbounded admiration."

"Not Violet's. She is too cold and icy. She may be dazzled and elated, but her heart will never be touched."

"Oh, don't say that! remember how devotedly she loves her benefactor."

"Aye, granted! but that is merely a selfish feeling. He has made her what she is, contributed to her comforts, helped to place her on the pinnacle upon which she stands. I will not say that she is destitute of gratitude, but GRATITUDE is not LOVE."

"Norman, you are hard on the poor thing. I never knew you so unjust."

"I am not unjust, I only speak the truth. Now if it were you, Millicent, I should say ——"

Millicent looked up, and he did not finish his speech. Their eyes met, and Millicent's thoughts went back to that summer's evening when Norman had told his loving, but luckless story. Surely, surely he had not loved all those long years? The blood mounted to her cheeks as she asked herself that question,—a question she did not know how to answer; and feeling confused, she hastily rose, murmured something about its being late, and left the room.

What was it that shed such a light over Norman's face as he sat and smoked his cigar, instead of going to bed? Can't you guess? If you can't, as the children say, I shall not tell you, so you must remain in ignorance.

The next day, immediately after breakfast, Norman departed to St. James's Street. Nothing was said at the breakfast-table about where he was going, nor of what had happened the preceding evening, it being settled

between Norman and Millicent not to mention anything to his mother, and thus he was spared all her innumerable remarks and inquiries.

When he returned, which was somewhat late in the day, he sought out Millicent, and faithfully detailed the whole of his adventures, which I, for the benefit of my readers, will tell in the most concise terms.

On the night which they will remember, the man now known by his proper name, Neville, called in Green Street; after leaving the policeman's house, he took his way across the Regent's Park in a somewhat confused state, being distracted by the disappearance of Rose and her child. In the midst of these uncomfortable cogitations, and in the loneliest part of the Park, he was stopped by a man placing himself directly across his path.

He looked up to see who it was that obstructed his way, and by the light of the moon recognised the man whom, of all others, he had cause to flee from—William Kingston!

"'So I have found you at last, have I?' cried Kingston. 'God knows I have sought long enough for you! Now, sir, you don't escape! Where is Rose?'

"'I don't know,' was Neville's prompt, and, as Kingston thought, untruthful answer.

"'Liar!' cried he; 'dare you to tell such a falsehood to me? You do know!'

"Mr. Neville says, his blood fired up at the word liar. He gave me his solemn word that, but for that obnoxious phrase, he should never have lifted his arm against Kingston; but, irritated at this indignity, he struck him on the mouth, saying, fiercely:—

"'Liar, am I? take that in your foul mouth!'

"The blood rushed from Kingston's lips, and, almost blinded with rage and pain, he set upon his adversary with desperate earnestness.

"The strife was fierce and unholy, each animated with deadly hatred to the other; each longing and thirsting for vengeance; both well matched in strength. At last the conflict began to grow unequal. Kingston turned faint; his blows were given at random, and Neville, perceiving this, rushed at him with all his force, and with a deadly blow stretched him on the ground.

"You will understand, Millicent, that this took place in the most unfrequented part

of the Park, out of sound of any human being, and far removed from policemen and their rattles. According to Mr. Neville's account, he was so much spent himself that he sat down on the ground to recover himself, and wipe away some of the marks of the affray. While so doing he observed that Kingston never moved,—that he had fainted; he got up and tried to place him in a more comfortable position; but when he touched him he found him so cold, so death-like, that a horrible fear crossed his mind that he had killed him.

"No sooner did this thought present itself than, ever selfish and intent on his own interests, he let drop what he thought was his dead adversary, and darted off at full speed before any one chanced to come up.

"When he reached home the danger of his situation alarmed him. He dared not go to his father (which was what he intended doing, and made him anxious to settle with Rose, and get her out of the way,) for fear of being tracked and brought back to satisfy the ends of justice; much less could he stay where he was; so, ever reckless and wayward, and standing in his own light to the full as much as he did in that of others, he instantly formed

a plan which he lost no time in putting into execution.

"Luckily, as he considered it, he had drawn upon his father's agent to a large amount, to enable him to settle with Rose and her child out of hand, for, bad as he was, he had not intended casting them forth to starve; but she having departed as we have seen, he had not been able to give it her. Under the circumstances he considered it most providential that he had not, and securing it about his person he packed up his clothes, and saying that he was going to Brighton for a day or so, sent for a cab and went off straightway to the London Bridge Railway Station.

"Arrived there, he dismissed the cab, left his luggage, and went down to the Docks to make inquiries as to what vessels were likely to be sailing immediately, when to his great relief he found one just clearing out. He obtained an interview with the captain, trumped up a story of having come up from the country, paid his fare, and before night found himself sleeping on board the 'Lady Alice,' which vessel, wind and weather permitting, was bound for Australia.

"He did not choose to tell me how he fared on first arriving at Sydney; but it seems, with his usual luck and effrontery, he contrived to captivate a rich widow, to whom he had offered himself in the capacity of manager; he then married her, and thus made himself master of all her broad lands and wondrous herds of sheep and cattle.

"Kingston did not die; the death-like appearance, which so alarmed Neville, being produced by the effects of the heavy blow he had received, he recovered; but his recovery was slow, and above a year elapsed before it was safe for him to return to the West Indies. Mr. Neville says that he caused inquiries to be made, but that he never got any answer; more than probable owing to the deficient postal arrangements which then existed between this country and Australia, and the very roundabout way in which he was forced to go to work."

"But why did he not write to his poor father?" asked Millicent. "What a hard heart he must have, knowing how dotingly his father loved him, not to send him some token that he was alive!"

"Ah! he was too much frightened, I

suppose, too reckless to care: yet he does seem to have a spark of natural feeling left, too; for it seems that, quite by chance, he met a man, whom he had formerly known in Barbadoes, and he told him the welcome intelligence that Mr. Kingston was still alive. The moment he convinced himself of this truth he came over here, and has written to his father, promising to go to Barbadoes, and take his wife with him, before he returns to Australia: for he is such a large landowner, and likes the country so much, that he would not live anywhere else. He proposes to persuade his father to part with his West Indian property, and accompany him back; which I think is very likely what old Mr. Neville will do."

"That looks well of him," returned Millicent, gently.

"Yes! I believe there is always some redeeming quality to be found in the most hardened sinner. But now I must tell you how we sped at Messrs. Buchan's."

Millicent bent forward in earnest expectation; to clear Eustace's fame in the eyes of the honest merchant, who showed her so much kindness that disastrous day, was a thing she ardently longed for.

"I made it all right," said Norman, answering the expression of her eyes. "Mr. Buchan is fully convinced of poor Eustace's innocence, as far as regards the unfounded and horrible accusation which caused his disastrous and untimely end. I must say, Mr. Neville paid for his sins this morning, if ever a man did. Won't that wife of his lead him a pretty life?"

"He won't tell her," said Millicent. "But never mind what he does. Thank God, my poor Eustace's character is cleared!"

"Won't he tell her? I suspect he will have to tell her far more than ever he reckoned on. He has got his master now; all poor Rose's wrongs are dearly avenged. By Jove! didn't she scowl at him while Mr. Buchan dilated on his barbarous treatment of Mary Sudbury!"

"What! did Mrs. Neville go with you to the City?" said Millicent, looking at him in unfeigned surprise.

"Aye, indeed she did! And when I took my leave of them at Fenton's Hotel, if ever I saw a lady bent upon mischief it was Mrs. Eustace Louis Neville."

Norman was right. The half-savage, half-

civilised wife of the false-hearted Neville avenged the wrongs of her deserted sisterhood; and so pecked at was he, that at last he threatened to leave her for good and all, and go to his father.

This threat reduced her to reason, for she had married him for love, and that love was as strong as ever. She therefore came down from her perch, and they made it up, and, lest he should meet with any more disagreeable adventures, he persuaded her to leave England for Barbadoes immediately.

This was accordingly done, and after one more interview with the haughty Violet, who maintained from first to last her imperturbable reserve, and could not be brought to treat him otherwise than as a perfect stranger, he departed with a firm resolve never, with his own free will, to set foot in England again.

One word about Violet, and we will take our leave of her. She did not marry Evan Jones. As to what she did, whether she married at all or remained single, it is of no importance to any one but herself, and I will leave it to my readers to map out the probable career of such a favourite of fortune as a successful prima donna.

I have little more to say about the secondary personages of my story, things went with them as they do with most of us. Mrs. Morley lingered on for some time, in the same hopeless state of mind, before she followed her beloved partner. Rose and Kate grew up fine girls, and married good, hearty, honest merchants. As to Blanche and Geraldine, they lived and flourished, and the latter is already beginning to think of the future prospects of her eldest daughter.

With respect to Norman, he no longer resides in Russell Square, but inhabits one of the stateliest mansions in Belgravia. Neither is he now a Queen's Counsel—that also is a thing of the past; but what will never be a thing of the past is his kindly nature. True to its impulses he asked me (the old maid who had so often lectured him) up from my retreat in Sussex, to spend a month in the great metropolis. Of course I was not proof against being invited by a Solicitor-general, so accepted the invitation with great pleasure.

One morning during my stay Millicent invited me to drive with her to Kensal Green. I complied, and we soon arrived at that lovely resting-place for those who have gone before

us. Millicent led the way to a spot embowered in trees, and there I perceived that a monument had been erected to the memory of Eustace Neville.

The June roses were in their glory, and the cemetery was a perfect paradise of flowers. I looked with emotion at the monument; it was a plain marble sarcophagus, and on it was simply engraved his name, the date of his birth, and that of his death. Underneath were these words of blessed import: "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth."

Then and there Millicent told me the sad history of her life—a history of which I then only knew the effects, not the causes—told it me almost word for word as I have related it to you.

When she told it me she was THE WIFE OF NORMAN AUSTIN.

FINIS.

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"The day of purely 'fashionable novels' is waning, and a new and different class of fiction is taking their place. *False and True* is a favourable specimen of the new school. It is, we believe, the second book written by the Honourable Lena Eden, and is likely to produce as much inquiry and provoke the same amount of curiosity as attended her first publication. *Easton and its Inhabitants* excited an animated controversy at the time, for it was maintained on the one hand and denied on the other that Easton was a real place with a fictitious name, and the characters introduced into it—'old maids,' 'gentlemen of all ages,' and 'ball-room beauties'—not fancy sketches, but downright photographs—such complete transcripts that the names of the originals could be pointed out if the locality of the veritable Easton were identified. This tribute to the graphic powers of the author was the proof of her skill, although originating in a mistake, for she was describing a class, and not individuals; and so it is with the tale now before us, *False and True*. There is a great deal of truth in it, but it is not all the truth; it is the next best thing to the whole truth, that which a modern French writer describes as a matter very desirable of attainment: 'Si ce n'est pas la vérité tout entière, ni même la vérité toute seule, c'est encore quelque chose de la vérité.' The reader of *False and True* cannot proceed beyond the tenth page before he becomes interested in the fate of the spoiled heiress, and is anxious to know what success will attend the plot of her scheming stepmother, by whom she has already been involved in a promise of marriage with an insipid young kinsman of the artful Lady Dynely. We can commend the volume heartily to those who delight in a truthful sketch of what is called 'fashionable life,' and who love to dwell in the fairy palaces of the ideal."—*Morning Post*, May 25.

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very delightful to a novel reader, which are set right in the end by a somewhat imperious *coup de main*. The impetuous Frank appears in an ultra-chivalric light, in his efforts to rescue his wayward, 'fast,' little cousin, Lady Hyacinthe, from the fate she had provoked; but 'we must not find fault with the bridge that carries over;' and as by this means several pairs of lovers marry and are happy to the end of the book, the seeming sacrifice was well made. If in the next tale the ladies and gentlemen were more chary of their love confidences, their private characters would gain as much as the curious reader would lose."—*Globe*, May 27.

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"We know not if 'the inhabitants' of the little Peddlington here described are drawn from the life, or are mere fanciful portraitures by the ingenious author. We are inclined to conclude them genuine, for there is about them a verisimilitude which could only be found in copies, or in the creations of a great genius, which L. E. certainly is not. The portraits may be somewhat disguised; but we have no doubt that the inhabitants of the true Easton recognise in the Du Quesnes, the Dulcies, Sir Walter, and Lord Fitz-Gerald, some old acquaintances—probably somewhat caricatured, but substantially true. The writer has considerable ability, and there is good promise in these pages, but practice will be required for its development."—*The Critic*, June 5.

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